

SYMBOLS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF VALUES:
KENNETH BURKE AND (RE)VALUATION

BY

C2008
Jan M. Hovden

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Communication Studies and the
Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Chairperson

Date Defended _____

The Dissertation Committee for Jan M. Hovden
certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation

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Committee:

Chairperson

Date Approved:_____

Acknowledgments

This project could not have been completed without the support of many individuals. I would like to thank Dr. Parson for his endless efforts in helping me complete my dissertation. He inspired me and helped me become a better scholar and teacher. I would like to thank Dr. Harris, Dr. Manelescu, Dr. Rowland and Dr. Antonio for being mentors and making my graduate school experience as positive as it could be. Without my fellow debate graduate assistants—Phil Samuels, Lindsey Shook, Mick Souders, Sarah Topp and Ben Warner—my time at KU would have been less productive and enriching. Thank you all for the emotional and intellectual support that you have given me over the years. I would also like to thank the members of the KU debate team for endless hours of entertainment and support. You made my time at KU one of the best experiences of my life. Finally, I want to thank my parents, Wally and Sandy Hovden, and my sister, Sherry Hovden for instilling in me a desire to learn and to advance myself. I love you, and I could not have done this without you.

Abstract

I argue that a theory of symbolic value formation is implicit in the writings of Kenneth Burke. I analyze ten of Burke's major writings and use what Burke refers to as the ten key terms of moral and aesthetic valuation as the means to ascertain what this theory is. I then outline the process of how individuals and social orders imbue people, ideas and things with value via symbol systems and how those values are altered over time based on interactions with the social and physical world. The work highlights people's desire for stable value systems along with how unstable those systems actually are.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1952, Marie Hochmuth Nichols argued that Kenneth Burke “has become the most profound student of rhetoric now writing in America” (M. H. Nichols 18), and in 1993 Edward Schiappa stated “forty years later, few would disagree” with Nichols’ assessment (401). For many, Burke’s effect on the field of rhetoric cannot be overstated. Edward Appel contends that he is “at the very least the most influential American rhetorician of the twentieth century” (“The Negative” 62), and Phillip Tompkins et al believe that “no reader of this journal needs to be convinced that the theories of Kenneth Burke have heavily influenced the practice of literary and rhetorical criticism” (135). He is seen by some as being ahead of his time as “one of America’s most prescient modern” critics (Jay 535). Specifically, Bernard Brock contends that “a brief examination of current communication journals will reveal that today Burke has become the most popular rhetorical theorist in the field” (347); Debra Hawhee goes so far as to note that many see him as “the father of contemporary rhetoric” (130). Even critics of Burke’s theories acknowledge the significant influence his work has had on the field. While they argue that his theories function “virtually hegemonically in the study of rhetoric,” Foss and Griffin (331), note that the creation of the Kenneth Burke society, the number of graduate seminars focusing on Burke’s theories, and the dominance of his theories in critical practice signifies the importance he has played in the field of communication studies (331).

Kenneth Burke achieved his reputation in the study of rhetoric by being one of the most prolific writers of the twentieth century¹ and by blending together a wide array of topics into a provocative theory of symbolic action. However, Burke was not merely a rhetorician as his works covered a vast array of topics, and one could argue that he was one of the original interdisciplinary scholars. As Herbert Simons notes, Burke was unique in the academy as a “college dropout who never held a tenured academic position” and who “resisted being ‘disciplined’” (4). This resistance to disciplinary structures is, in part, what makes Burke’s writings so fruitful. “[H]e invariably brings to each object of his scrutiny an overarching interdisciplinary framework, and he consistently takes from his engagements with the texts of a given field’s ideas that might help to fertilize another” (4). The profound effect that his holistic approach to his studies has had on the academy is best illustrated by the vast array of disciplines that have been touched by his writings. Scholars in fields as diverse as Sociology,² Philosophy,³ Business,⁴ Economics,⁵ Anthropology,⁶

¹ The Kenneth Burke society has compiled a bibliography of 595 writings by Burke.

² See for example Valerie Malhotra Bentz and Wade Kenny, ““Body-as-World”: Kenneth Burke’s Answer to the Postmodernist Charges against Sociology,” American Sociological Association 15.1 (1997). Ann Branaman, “Reconsidering Kenneth Burke: His Contributions to the Identity Controversy,” The Sociological Quarterly 35.3 (1994). James G. Carrier, “Knowledge, Meaning, and Social Inequality in Kenneth Burke,” The American Journal of Sociology 88.1 (1982). Hugh Duncan, Communication and Social Order (New York: The Bedminster Press, 1962). Bruce E. Gronbeck, “Tradition and Technology in Local Newscasts: The Social Psychology of Form,” The Sociological Quarterly 38.2 (1997). Joseph Gusfield, “The Literary Rhetoric of Science: Comedy and Pathos in Drinking and Driving Research,” American Sociological Review 4 (1976). Michael A. Overington, “Kenneth Burke as a Social Theorist,” Sociological Inquiry 47.2 (1977). Thomas Meisenhelder, “Law as Symbolic Action: Kenneth Burkes Sociology of Law,” Symbolic Interaction 4 (1981).

³ See for example James G. Carrier, “Misrecognition and Knowledge,” Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy and the Social Sciences 22 (1979). David L. Hildebrand, “Was Kenneth Burke a Pragmatist?,” Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society 31.3 (1995). David Lawrence, “The Mythico-Ritual Syntax of Omnipotence,” Philosophy of East and West 48.4 (1998). Paul Meadows, “The Semiotic of Kenneth Burke,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 18.1 (1957).

Religious Studies,⁷ Psychology,⁸ Education,⁹ and Geography¹⁰ have utilized his theories.

Burke resisted disciplinary boundaries because he saw the social world as a complicated web of interacting variables that did not fit neatly into the delimited boundaries established by the academy. His writings are difficult because “he is dealing with complex and subtle situations” (Warren 226) that cannot be easily reduced and simplified. His corpus of writings expands over most of the 20th century, and to understand his theories a synthesis of many of his works is frequently required. One commonality among many of his texts is human symbol systems and the ways in which they shape human motivations and actions. He was greatly influenced by the tumultuousness of the century in which he lived (P&C xlvii), and he sought answers to numerous questions about the relationship between language use and the ways in which humans understand and act toward the social and physical world around them. I was drawn to Burke’s theories because of this aspect of his writing. I am interested

⁴ See for example Janis Forman, "Collaborative Business Writing: A Burkean Perspective for Future Research," Journal of Business Communication 28 (1991). Mark Simpson, "The Pentad as Map: A Strategy for Exploring Rhetorical Cases," Bulletin of the Association for Business Communication 49 (1986).

⁵ See for example Donald N. McCloskey, "The Rhetoric of Economics," Journal of Economic Literature 21 (1983). Donald N. McClosky, "The Dismal Science and Mr. Burke: Economics as Critical Theory," The Legacy of Kenneth Burke, eds. Herbert W. Simons and Trevor Melia (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

⁶ See for example William Mishler, "The Question of the Origin of Language Rene Girard, Eric Gans, and Kenneth Burke," Anthropoetics 5.1 (1999). Karen Ann Watson, "A Rhetorical and Sociolinguistic Model for the Analysis of Narrative," American Anthropologist 75.1 (1973).

⁷ See for example C. Allen Carter, "Logology and Religion: Kenneth Burke on the Metalinguistic Dimensions of Language," The Journal of Religion 72.1 (1992).

⁸ See for example Richard Y. Duerden, "Kenneth Burke's Systemless System: Using Pepper to Pigeonhole an Elusive Thinker," Journal of Mind and Behavior 3 (1982).

⁹ See for example James Stanley Mullican, "Kenneth Burke's Comic Attitude: A Corrective to Propaganda Analysis," Contemporary Education 43 (1971).

¹⁰ Jonathan M. Smith, "Geographical Rhetoric: Modes and Tropes of Appeal," Annals of the Association of American Geographers 86.1 (1996).

in valuation and its relationship to symbol systems, and Burke believed that the foundation of moral thought resides within the linguistic construct of the hortatory negative (LAS 10, 16). As such, the proper realm to study values is the rhetorical. While Burke did not neatly outline a theory of (re)valuation,¹¹ I believe that Burke's writings provide insight into the question of how values are formed, transmitted and altered. Many of his writings implicate (re)valuation, and I believe that he expresses an implicit theory of symbolic (re)valuation. My goal in this writing is to compile and explicate his understanding this process as well as show how it needs to be adapted to contemporary exigencies.

While values have been discussed and analyzed for millennia, my purpose is not to place Burke's theories in this broader discussion. Instead, my goal is to compile and explicate Burke's understanding of (re)valuation, its relationship to symbol use, and to illustrate ways in which his theories can help explain social phenomena that are related to values. Placing Burke's theory within the broader discourse of values is certainly important, but it is not possible without first unpacking his theory. This effort will add greater insight into Burke's writings by compiling and clarifying his understanding of the issue of (re)valuation. The process of (re)valuation is intrinsic to human interactions, and analyzing how this process occurs adds to our understanding of Burke's conception of symbolic action. The values we possess provide motivation for the decisions we make and the actions that

¹¹ I utilize the term (re)valuation to illustrate the ways in which values are continually being altered as individuals and social orders exist. While some might like to think of values as an unchanging part of their person, the reality is that one's value system is continuously being altered as new exigencies are encountered.

we take, and gaining insight into the process of how we come to hold and alter values further clarifies this important aspect of Burke's writings.

While discussions of values are present throughout much of Burke's writings, few scholars have attempted to directly address how Burke's theories implicate (re)valuation. A number of authors have mentioned elements of his views of (re)valuation, but only Jeffrey Murray has attempted a systematic discussion of Burkean ethics. I will first outline the ways in which Burke's notion of (re)valuation have been tangentially discussed, then I will address Murray's position on Burkean ethics and argue that it provides an insufficient grounding to fully explain Burke's conception of (re)valuation.

Because much of Burke's writings involved literary criticism, some approach his ideas of values from within this tradition. James Albrecht attempts to show how the relationship between Ralph Ellison and Kenneth Burke adds an element of social responsibility to Ralph Waldo Emerson's American individualism (Albrecht 47). Specifically, he contends that "Burke argues that an individualist ethics must include gestures of communication and self-analysis that are more directly political" (52). Hence, "we must consider how our individual acts participate in larger social contexts" (52). Here Albrecht lays out a central element of Burke's notion of values—humans are social beings and as such, any understanding of values must recognize the social aspect of the value choices made by individuals.

S. John Macksood further clarifies this point by acknowledging Burke's belief that all elements of communication are imbued with valuations—including the

aesthetic and the scientific. “Burke cautions us not to suppose that an apparently exclusively aesthetic¹² or scientific set of purposes prohibits the coexistence of an ethical set of purposes” (169). Scientific thought has attempted to bracket questions of values and portray itself as disinterested in questions of values; however, for Burke, this is an impossibility because scientists necessarily make choices of what to investigate and how the study should be done, and these choices are always value laden. As Lewis notes “he regards all language...as having an ethical-moral function,” and the “splitting of the analytical from the moral” is problematic and “against this splitting he places his integrated perspective, one which combines in a single action the analytical and the moral” (86).

A number of authors have further highlighted the inherent relationship between language use and ethics (Appel "The Negative" 58; Coe "Beyond Diction" 370; Coe "Defining Rhetoric" 43; Feehan "Theory of Language" 145; Hawhee 135). This topic will be accounted for in greater detail in chapter two; for now it is sufficient to note that many scholars have acknowledged Burke's notion that all language use is infused with value choices and as such, language is inherently ethical. However, we also use language to create and shape particular value judgments about the world around us. C. Allen Carter argues that one of the ways Burke's writings help to explain this process is through his explanation of the narrative form, which provides moral purpose to human existence and establishes the guiding force of our lives ("Myth" 344).

¹² The relationship between aesthetic judgments and moral values will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

The most systematic discussion of ethics and Burkean thought is found in the writings of Jeffrey Murray, who is interested in creating a metaphysical foundation for the ethical thought presented by Burke. Murray contends that Burke fails to create a complete system of ethics (Dialogue 73) because Burke elides the Other ("Other Ethics" 29). As a result, Murray feels that a metaphysical account of ethical obligations cannot be created solely from Burke's writings because Burke foregrounds a focus on the self at the expense of the Other ("Other Ethics" 33). He, however, does not see this as a reason to reject all aspects of Burkean thought. For him, the master trope of Irony and the concept of recalcitrance found throughout Burke's writings provide a basis for an ethical system that accounts for the Other ("Motives" 22). Murray draws upon the ethical theory of Emmanuel Levinas to extend and make more complete a Burkean ethical system. It is from Levinas' writings that Murray attempts to establish the necessity of grounding ethics within a metaphysical system. He believes ethical metaphysics should be considered the first philosophy because both ontology and epistemology are tied up in the self, but ethics as a social act must precede the self ("Other Ethics" 35). He argues that combining Burke's ideas with those of Levinas' ethical stance enhances both theorists. For him, this move provides a completion to a Burkean ethical system while helping to fix Levinas' questionable assumption of an actual encounter with the Other (Dialogue 100).

Murray lays out an interesting hypothesis about the ability to connect the work of Burke and Levinas. However, it is problematic as Burke resisted grounding his

theories in metaphysics (Hawhee 131-2), since “a metaphysic or mechanistic way of viewing the universe posits the universe in almost a predetermined way—as a universe—as one body, one cause, one truth” (139-40). His rejection of a metaphysical grounding for his thought was deliberate. “For Burke himself this is a principled omission rather than a lack” (Bygrave 45). Timothy Crusius explains

Burke represents a doubly skeptical attitude toward metaphysics. On the one hand, he doubts that it can be overcome or simply put aside. We can change the subject, but it will keep coming back. On the other hand, he finds no grounds for affirming an assured grounding. As all genuine skeptics must do...he simply leaves the metaphysical question open. His affirmations, his constructions and reconstructions, are all, so to speak, suspended in mid-air or “grounded in ways that are ultimately groundless themselves. In this sense he offers Being without metaphysics. Above all, what we must not forget in trying to understand Burke on Being is that he takes everything significant that anyone says and writes as rhetoric, as strategies for encompassing situations. This means that all notions of Being are tools for coping with ourselves, with others, with life. Burke does not purport to reflect on Being-in-itself. What interests him is not Being as such, but the value of concepts of Being as part of an art of living. (94-5)

As Hildebrand notes, metaphysical questions for Burke must be grounded in “experience as lived” (638).

Murray acknowledges that his own ethical frame does not account for value claims as lived experiences. “Levinas’s philosophy of ethics is not intended to provide a normative rule for ethical decision making” and “because any ethical dilemma involves more than one Other, or at least a self and an Other there is always a plurality of ethical imperatives,” which means one has “entered into ‘politics,’ where politics is understood in contrast to ethics, as a realm of decision making” (Murray Dialogue 28-9). However, it is this realm of “politics” that Burke considered the most important issue. “Bracketing the existence of metaphysical truth allows Burke to concentrate on how truth claims arise in interaction and how people use these claims to accomplish certain purposes in the world” (Hassett 383). Hence, to understand Burke’s conception of values it is necessary to understand the ways in which valuations occur within people’s actual existence, and it is here that I locate my project. My purpose is not to create a system of values but instead to explore the ways in which people come to hold certain values and the processes that occur to allow valuations to be altered over time.

Burke’s writings are replete with attempts to understand human motivations on both the individual and the social level. Underlying these assessments is a theory of symbolic valuation. People’s motivating forces are frequently driven by their value system, which for Burke is necessarily derived from human interaction via symbol systems. Hence, it is necessary to understand the role language plays in shaping our valuation of the world and how these valuations shape and are shaped by the social orders in which we live. Burke provides a pragmatic theory of symbolic

valuation that accounts for the influence of the material world and broader social structures in the development of individual and social value systems. He focuses his writings on the interplay among symbols, individuals, and society, and his writings provide a broad based understanding of (re)valuation that accounts for how individual values are (re)constructed by the interplay among self, society, the material world, and language.

Conducting an etymological analysis of the word “crisis,” Burke provides the foundation for the import of values in both the social and symbolic realms. He notes that the word “crisis” is the Greek word for judgment, which suggests the centrality of values because every effort at judgment necessitates an underlying act of valuation (P&C xlvii). It is impossible to make a judgment without the process of evaluation, which can only occur within the realm of the symbolic. “[I]nsofar as the individual is involved in conflict with other individuals or groups, the study of this same individual would fall under the head of *Rhetoric*” (ROM 23). The study of the relationship between symbol use and actions is an essential area of inquiry. “The very power of criticism has enabled man to build up cultural structures so complex that still greater powers of criticism are needed” (P&C 5), and “his greater critical capacity has increased not only the range of his solutions, but also the range of his problems” (6). As such, increasing our understanding of the complexity of human interactions via symbol systems is necessary if we hope to overcome the inevitable conflicts that these structures produce.

Burke views social motives as a critical point of analysis for two reasons. First, the ramifications of conflict in the social realm have the potential to be significantly more devastating than strife at the individual level. Second, the individual is necessarily a product of the social environment in which she¹³ resides. When assessments are made about the individual, one “must discover how many collective ingredients, how much deference to custom, was assumed” when making the judgment (ATH 113). This is not to deny the import of individual value systems because social values are a product of the aggregate of individual values; what it does indicate, however, is that individual value systems are greatly influenced by the social world that they occupy and the pre-existing value frame of the culture. The process of socialization always influences the individual’s value system whether it is by a complete or partial acceptance of the dominant value system and/or by a complete or partial rejection of it. For Burke, socialization provides the basis for all valuations because “man justifies himself in the modes of socialization that go with his society,” (P&C lv); hence, its effects manifest themselves as a guidebook for interacting with the world. As such socialization is a strategy—an orientation (24), and these orientations provide the framework in which and the criteria through which (re)valuation occurs.

Value systems will always be a nexus between individually held values and those expressed by the larger social order. People have systems of values that are

¹³ For the sake of clarity and stylistic concerns, I am choosing to use the singular case in many instances. To deal with the problems of using the generic “he” as the referent, I will be alternating between feminine and masculine pronouns among the paragraphs. Any single paragraph will only use either the feminine or the masculine.

unique to them, but those systems are greatly influenced by the social order in which they reside. This complexity makes understanding (re)valuation difficult because value expressions are often ephemeral, and pinpointing the time, place and reason for value change will always be imprecise. These difficulties, however, do not justify avoiding efforts to understand how the process works—even though any conclusions reached will necessarily be incomplete. I turn to Burke in this endeavor because he provides a rationale and a partial methodology for doing so, which I will utilize throughout my work.

David Timmerman and Larry Smith argue Burke offers both macroscopic and microscopic methodologies (235). The macroscopic approach “interprets the ways in which public discourse labels the typical, recurrent situations of life for particular groups of auditors,” and “it is through this process of naming that rhetors provide equipment for living or medicine for their audiences” (235). Because values are necessarily a social phenomenon, I utilize this macroscopic approach to illustrate the way in which people and behaviors are valued can potentially alter the overall value system of an individual or social order. Microscopic methodologies, on the other hand, refer to the specific tools that Burke outlines as a means to better understand a given piece of rhetoric, such as agon analysis or pentadic criticism (235). Utilizing both macroscopic and microscopic analysis, I will engage in two endeavors in subsequent chapters. The first is to extract from Burke’s writings¹⁴ his understanding

¹⁴ The texts examined in this work are: Attitudes Toward History, Counter-Statement, Permanence and Change, A Grammar of Motives, A Rhetoric of Motives, Language as Symbolic Action, On Human Nature, The Philosophy of Literary Form, The Rhetoric of Religion, and Essays Toward a

of symbolic value formation—a Burkean theory of (re)valuation. While he discusses values throughout his writings, he does not lay out his theory in a single location. Instead, his theory is found in fragments throughout his writings. Austin Warren notes the difficulty with Burke’s writings is that “he invests his subjects with no false clarity or artificial simplification. He is dealing with complex and subtle situations” (Warren 226), which frequently means that his ideas are not found in a single location. My goal is to compile these fragments and to outline what his theoretical perspective is. To this end, I begin my analysis in Attitudes Toward History where he argues that ten key terms are “at the very basis of both esthetic and moralistic strategy” (202)¹⁵. While some of these terms have been analyzed, no one has yet examined the ten terms in relationship to each other as a foundation for (re)valuation. Since Burke sees these ten terms as the foundation for understanding values,¹⁶ my goal is to trace the contours these terms take throughout his differing texts to unpack Burke’s overall understanding of symbolic valuation. In a sense, I am Burking Burke and using one of his expressed methods on his own writings to better understand his theoretical understanding of values. I begin with the microscopic method of a key word analysis, although I modify it slightly from how it is commonly understood, to examine how the ten terms function as a means to understand symbolic (re)valuation.

Symbolic of Motives. While a plethora of other writings by Burke exists, these texts provide a strong representation of his theories across his lifetime.

¹⁵ These terms are authority symbols, identification, acceptance and rejection, rituals of purification and rebirth, transcendence upward and transcendence downward, character building by secular prayer, the collective poems of socio-economic organization, bureaucratization of the imaginative, alienation, and repossession (ATH 202).

¹⁶ Burke’s writings are complex in that he uses terms interchangeably and at points abandons some terms in favor of other terms. I am not arguing that these ten terms are the only possible terms one could focus on in examining Burke’s understanding of values; however, my analysis accounts for other terms as well in that they are examined in relation to the ten key terms outlined above.

Critics utilizing this method generally determine the key words in a text based upon the text itself by finding the words that best inform and attract one's attention and the effort of the entire piece is to define the terms (Kuseski 327-8). I, however, am modifying this approach. Since Burke stated that he saw ten terms as the basis for moral action, I am following his stated view of the issue and utilizing these terms as the basis for my key word analysis. I examine the terms in relation to other terms and concepts related to valuation to ascertain Burke's overall understanding of (re)valuation.

The second Burkean method that I utilize is the representative anecdote, which is the "principle tool" of the macroscopic critic (Timmerman and Smith 235). Brummett explains the representative anecdote as "when the critic identifies a dramatic form that underlies and can thus represent discourse" (3). However, the "anecdote need *not* have been said explicitly in the discourse under analysis. It is a *method* for better understanding the vocabulary of utterances rather than the utterance itself" (4). The anecdote can take two different forms: the synecdotal and the metaphorical. In the synecdotal, the critic examines a "single discourse" (6), and the anecdote represents the motives found in the discourse (4). This "allows the critic to judge the motives in the discourse which have been brought to light and thus, to function as a social critic" (5). In the metaphorical, the critic focuses on "groups of discourses" (6), and "seeks something that ties the discourses together" (6). Since my focus is on the question of valuation, I use the representative anecdote in two ways. The first is in the analysis of Burke's work itself as I look for the common linkages

regarding values throughout his texts. In the second, I use Burke's theories to highlight values present in public discourse in the United States.

Hence, the second endeavor of my project is to show how Burke's theory can be illuminated by and can illuminate examples of (re)valuation that occur(ed) both historically and in the contemporary era. As such, I will point to specific examples that help to clarify Burke's theory as well as exemplars that Burke's theories can help to explain. All claims being made in this book are efforts to illustrate the implications of Burke's understanding of (re)valuation. I will point to a multiplicity of examples from social institutions and popular culture to illuminate what Burke's theories can tell us about particular social phenomena. At points, I will be discussing issues that have been addressed from different theoretical perspectives and in other literatures. However, because my goal is only to elucidate what Burke's theory tells us, I will not be placing my analyses within this broader discourse. I recognize that Burke's views do not tell the entire story of any issue that I examine, but for the sake of clarity and brevity, my sole focus will be on what Burke's theories suggest about them. Hence, all claims made herein should be understood as *only* an explication of Burke's theory or of the directions that Burke's theories might potentially lead us in understanding the relationship between (re)valuation, individuals, and the social order.

Burke argues that comprehending "man in society" is necessary if we are to understand humans because we are social beings who create our knowledge of self and our place in the universe based upon our relations with other human beings (ATH 170). "People learn of life's conditions through the prescriptive contents of public

messages” (L. D. Smith 252). One area where this is particularly true is in the realm of valuation because value judgments regulate the ways in which we act toward others. In contemporary American society, people interact with far more people who possess a greater diversity in values than at any previous time in history; this is magnified by communication technology that allows for social engagements among people and in settings that have not been previously possible. For example, on-line gaming communities let individuals interact with others from around the globe in a forum that allows for both anonymity and the development of relationships that would otherwise not occur. This circumstance brings questions of valuation to the forefront because many problems that we face at the individual and social level are directly connected to our value systems and the ways in which we rhetorically engage others.

To understand how values are symbolically formed and instantiated within a social order, it is necessary to examine value discourse. “To think through a matter is to trace an ever widening circle of relationships” (Burke P&C 230). It is what provides the ability to create a representative anecdote that highlights the overarching system of values and how they are rhetorically constructed. Consequently, it is imperative to analyze myriad social locations wherein value discourse is present because they provide insight into the ways in which values are symbolically negotiated within and among social orders,¹⁷ which can highlight the way in which a revaluation of values occurs. “This strategy even opens us to the resources of

¹⁷ When I refer to social orders, I am using the term in its broadest possible sense. Social orders can range from the smallest dyad to complex societies such as the United States, and large social orders are comprised of myriad smaller groupings that have unique values.

‘popular’ philosophy, as embodied not only in proverbs and old saws, but also in the working vocabulary of every-day relationships” (ATH 172). Terms from politics, business, the law, folk art, and such should be viewed “as a collective philosophy of motivation, arising to name the relationship, or social situations, which people have found so pivotal” (173). This approach entreats us to make “even bad books and trivial remarks legitimate objects of study” (173), and “it does not waste the world’s rich store of error, as those parochial-minded persons waste it who dismiss all thought before a certain date as ‘ignorance’ and ‘superstition’” (172). All symbolic action provides a lens through which to understand valuation, and this approach “cherishes the lore of so-called ‘error’ as a genuine aspect of truth” (172). This approach provides a means to understand the relationship between symbols, values and our existential condition from a multiplicity of perspectives, which adds to our overall knowledge of how (re)valuation occurs.

Any project of this nature will never be complete, but what I hope to illustrate throughout this book by using a macroscopic approach to representative anecdotes is that studying a variety of cultural markers is necessary to understand any social order’s value system. I will draw liberally from social institutions such as the legal system and political organizations, which represent the meta-level discourse on valuation in the order because all aspects of government function to bureaucratize the value system of the order by codifying and enforcing particular value judgments. The bureaucratized values provide the scene in which all (re)valuation occurs. Examining institutions could not be more important in understanding the process of (re)valuation.

Politicians attempt to symbolically enact the values held by members of their political party and engage in efforts to establish their value lens as the preferred one of the order. Laws outline critical values that are to be compelled by the power of the state. However, the bureaucratized nature of social institutions seldom changes rapidly and frequently lags alterations in valuation that are occurring within the broader society. Hence, it is necessary to look at other social locations, such as popular culture.

Many of Burke's analyses revolved around art and literature, and to better examine his contention that the symbolic process of moral and aesthetic valuation is the same, it is necessary to follow this same approach to better flesh out what this aspect of his theory suggests. He found it useful to mine the great works to ascertain what issues were important to people during particular eras. This does not imply that art always imitates culture. It does, however, mean that art illustrates cultural values, even when the work of art is intended to repudiate the values. Art is derived from and created through the symbol systems of the culture in which one resides, and it is inherently limited by that symbols system and its concomitant values.¹⁸ As in all symbol use, art can function as a reflection, selection, and/or deflection of reality, but it also has the potential of imagination, which allows one to see a world that is not. As such, it plays a role in developing the broader narrative around which social values are constructed and has historically played a significant role in the development of Western culture (Burke CS 66). Art is symbolic and as such, it is

¹⁸ This issue will be discussed in greater detail in chapter three when I discuss the relationship between moral and aesthetic valuation.

necessarily imbued with ethical aspects;¹⁹ popular culture is no different, and because of its increased import in the contemporary era it plays a significant role in the process of (re)valuation. “By transmitting cultural values to a mass audience and by providing a nonthreatening forum whereby these values can be exposed, challenged and refined, popular art serves the ‘classical’ function of making clearer a society’s axiomatic assumptions and root beliefs” (Kimberling 94). The representations of individual and societal choices necessarily contain implicit value judgments that will influence the values of individuals and the order itself.

What is critical for this analysis is that art provides a virtual symbolic realm to explore ideas and how to value them, which can then be replicated if so desired in one’s extant life. This process, of course, is a double-edged sword; it can be used to envision and enact a better way to live one’s life, or it can be used to maintain an oppressive system, or to justify destructive behaviors. In his essay “The Nature of Art Under Capitalism,” Burke argues that art can function to cause acceptance of the status quo system by allowing a symbolic resolution of conflict that cannot be resolved in actuality (PLF 271-278). Conversely, art can also serve as a lightning rod that allows individuals to discuss and deal with social tensions in a safe environment (CS xii). In both situations, art provides a symbolic outlet through which people can better understand their extant lives and how to approach its daily exigencies. When one considers the import that artistic expression plays in shaping our systems of valuation, it is important to have an expansive understanding of artistic

¹⁹ The relationship between symbols systems and ethics will be further discussed in chapter two.

expression so that a more complete analysis of valuation can occur. I believe that the inclusion of a plethora of venues, such as popular culture, that would not have traditionally been considered artistic expression is justified because they function in a symbolically similar way. In all instances, “artistic” expression is likely to have unintended consequences because of the easy slippage between aesthetic and ethical valuation.²⁰ However, an action that provides a compelling story line does not always translate into a workable way to actually live one’s life. As such, it is critical to analyze the myriad places in which this transference occurs. To truly understand the ramification of aesthetic standards for valuation into the realm of the ethical, it is useful to expand the discussion of art to encompass all aspects of popular culture. I believe that in contemporary America, any symbolically based leisure activity ought to be considered in the same genus as that of the high art and literature on which Burke focused much of his analyses. Popular culture such as television, movies, music, sporting events, playing video games, etc., functions in much the same way as traditional art forms. In order to grasp the enormity of the sway that artistic expression has on society, it is necessary to view it in its broadest sense. While I do not include analyses of all of these aspects of popular culture, I believe it is productive to operate from this expanded definition of artistic expression for the reasons listed above.

Jim Cullen argues that popular culture has a significant impact on today’s culture because it is “refracted through the prism of mass production” (20-21).

²⁰ This relationship between aesthetic and moral valuation will be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

Economic interests can see greater gain from popular culture, and consequently, it is easier to access because it is disseminated through every possible media. It finds you; you do not have to find it. Furthermore, an economic interest exists in continually pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable. If a movie or song makes money, it will be (re)produced, and competition guarantees that what makes money for one will be utilized by others, magnifying the effect that it has. Hence, popular culture has become a significant purveyor of values within contemporary society, and as Burke argues, one should “give thought to ‘folk criticism’” (ATH 173).

In subsequent chapters, I explore Burke’s notion of (re)valuation and draw upon examples of value discourse to both help explain what Burke’s theory looks like in practical application as well as to illustrate the ways Burke’s theory can illuminate cultural phenomena. To begin in chapters two and three, however, I lay out key concepts of symbol use generally that help provide the broad framework in which Burke’s theory of (re)valuation operates. In chapter two I discuss orientations to illustrate how they provide the scenic background for all valuation, and what Burke sees as the inherent relationship between ethics and language. On its face, the latter may give the appearance that there is not a difference between symbolic action and (re)valuation. The ethical aspect of language merely indicates that all of our language use has an ethical aspect; however, it does not explain *how* things are ultimately imbued with value through the process of (re)valuation. My focus on (re)valuation helps to explain how individuals and social orders determine what is good and bad, and right and wrong, which is a distinct process. The purpose of this chapter is to lay

the scenic background in which (re)valuation occurs. In chapter three, I examine the relationship between moral and aesthetic valuations, which Burke saw as being symbolically the same. Since (re)valuation in both realms follows the same symbolic process, highlighting the similarities helps to better explain the overall process by which systems of values are created. As such it helps to illuminate what Burke's overall theory of valuation is.

In the remaining chapters, I turn to Burke's ten key terms for moral and aesthetic (re)valuation to unpack his overall theory. I also attempt to extend Burke's theories to account for the how changes in communication technologies implicate his theory. In chapter four I discuss the collective poems of socio-economic organization, which is Burke's way of highlighting the implications that the organization of a society's productive forces has on the values of the order and its individuals. The structure and order it provides society affects virtually all parts of our lives, and "occupational psychoses" suggests that this will include valuation as standards from the economic realm are transferred to other aspects of people's lives.

In chapters five and six I examine frames of acceptance, rejection and transition, which represent the overall attitude held by individuals and social orders. I argue that there are three differing ways the frames can be understood—attitudinal, heuristic, and rhetorical. This tripartite distinction illuminates subtle differences in the way Burke uses the terms, and it helps alleviate some of the problems others have identified with the comic frame in particular.

In chapters seven through nine I explore the relationship between symbols of authority, word magic, and identification. These three chapters illustrate the practical relationship between moral and aesthetic valuation as I examine how we symbolically instantiate our values, and how social phenomena such as popular culture can implicate this process. In chapter ten I discuss the ways in which people disconnect from the values of a social order via alienation, and in chapter eleven I examine how they reconnect with others through the process of repossession.

Chapter 2: Orientations, Ethics and Language

Values are what Burke refers to as dialectical terms—symbolically constructed ideas that are not found in nature. Instead they are purely human constructs that arise out of our lived experiences and the symbols systems that we use to express them. As such, it is necessary to examine the way in which humans form an understanding of their world and the relationship between symbol systems and ethical choices. Since these aspects are prior to the creation of values—the hortatory admonishments of right and wrong, and good and bad—I will first outline Burke’s theoretical perspective on these issues so a deeper understanding of (re)valuation can occur. As language using, social beings, it is impossible to discern valuation outside of the context of language and society because it is at the intersection among the individual, culture, and language where values are formed. In this chapter, I examine orientations and the ethical aspects of language to flesh out this intersection in order lay out the scenic background of (re)valuation.

Orientations

Orientations are central to the process of valuation because they provide the meta-understanding of the world that allows for evaluations to be made and categories to be created. One’s “orientation is the sum of all we know; the meaningful construction of the world embodied in our knowledge of it” (Carrier "Knowledge" 50). One’s orientation is derived from a sense of relationships that have been established by previous experiences, which subsequently shapes one’s understandings of the world, drives one’s future actions, and leads to judgments of

right and wrong (Burke P&C 18), and it ultimately “affects the means we select to achieve our ends” (Blankenship, Murphy and Rosenwasser 5). As such, a person’s orientation shapes how she understands and evaluates a situation and the response she will enact in response to it. An individual acts to shape her orientation by the choices and judgments that she makes; however, the orientation has its own power and follows a logic of its own. While an individual always retains an element of choice, the force of one’s orientation pushes her toward particular decisions and valuations. “[T]he vast network of mutually sustained values and judgments, makes it more difficult for them to perceive the nature of re-orientation required, and to select their means accordingly” (Burke P&C 23). As such, one must view an orientation as being actually existing because its concomitant values shape one’s future behaviors (23).

In some respects, an orientation can be thought of as a “schema of serviceability” (Burke P&C 21) that provides a roadmap for traversing the physical and social environment. Consequently, those things that make one’s life easier are frequently adjudged as having moral worth (21). This evaluation of the serviceable as a moral good provides the first glimpse at the way in which one’s orientation can precipitate conflict within the social sphere, since what is serviceable for the individual does not necessarily equate with that which is serviceable for the social order. One does not have to work too hard to see this phenomenon in our contemporary society. Consider the ways in which our society values the making of money. The individual person or corporation frequently prioritizes the attainment of wealth over what is healthy for the environment or other members of society (23).

This can cause conflict between the individual and the social order, but it can also cause internal discord within the individual as well, as one's orientation simultaneously pushes him in potentially incompatible directions. This contradiction necessitates a symbolic means of resolving the tension and presages the need for a (re)valuation to occur.

Implicit within each orientation is "a vocabulary of ought and ought not, with attendant vocabulary of praiseworthy and blameworthy (Burke P&C 21). These hortatorical lexicons are molded by the individual to fit one's perception of the "good life" (29), which is always influenced by elements both intrinsic and extrinsic to the person. When the individual's interpretation of events is at odds with the broader social milieu, he will linguistically alter the categories constructed by his orientation in order to "socialize" his own interpretations (36). "The individual must socialize his desires: bring them into conformity with the collective orientation" (Carrier "Knowledge" 51). Hence, the individual constantly negotiates between his own orientation and the pressures that the social orientations have on his understandings of the hortatorical assumptions implicit in his value system, and it is via these vocabularies that revaluations occur.

Orientations provide the means through which people interpret and understand both self and society. Each act of interpretation necessitates making judgments, and consequently orientations are "inescapably ethical" in nature because valuation is inherent in judgment (Burke P&C 257). The ethical aspect of orientations is furthered by the interaction between a person's moral codes and the actual choices

that she makes in her life. The underlying attitudes form the range and quality of one's observations and actions, hence limiting the perception of viable alternatives (176). It is through this limiting of choices that an orientation can become a "self-perpetuating structure" and why it is "basically ethical" (262). This is not to say that orientations are stable and unchanging—they are not. What it does mean is that orientations have a force on the individual and the social order, and they are difficult to change radically under normal circumstances because "[a]n orientation is largely a self-perpetuating system, in which each part tends to corroborate the other parts" (168). Hence, an orientation is generally able to withstand challenges to it by a process of casuistic stretching, wherein one symbolically alters circumstances so that they can be accounted for by the present system (ATH 230).

However, this does not mean that orientations are unchangeable. While they are difficult to overhaul, each orientation "contains the germs of its dissolution" (Burke P&C 169). This change can occur quickly when traumatic or positively memorable events occur that shake a person's foundational beliefs. Strongly negative or positive occurrences have the possibility to implicate all or part of one's orientation (114-5 note 1), and hence, it can dissipate rapidly under the pressure of newly emergent conditions and the contradictions that they expose. History is rife with occurrences where a massive change of attitude emerged at a particular time and location as a response to a particular exigency. The monikers used to label historical epochs illustrates this point. Ages such as stone, bronze, and iron represent instances where the introduction of certain knowledge forms into human existence

fundamentally altered the daily lives of individuals and consequently that of society at large. At the level of the individual, experiences such as death of a loved one, the birth of a child, marriage, religious conversion, etc. can precipitate the same type of change. People who experience these changes rapidly frequently feel a sense of becoming a new person. A ritual dying and rebirth allows for a new self to emerge.

This sort of rapid transformation is frequently accompanied by a revaluation of one's system of values, and "in this way individual pain may lead to radical evangelism, as the sufferer attempts to socialize his position by inducing others to repudiate the orientation painful to himself" (Burke P&C 114-5 note 1). When this process is writ large on a societal level, eras of political and social tumultuousness are likely to emerge as the dominant value system fends off encroachments on its territory from the new interloper, which can lead to the rise of multiple forces competing to control the value system of the social order. The sexual revolution of the 1960s and the subsequent rise in power of the religious right that began in the 1970s are but two interrelated examples of this phenomenon in recent American history.²¹ The rapidity of change has the potential to lead to massive transformations in people's lived reality and subsequently in the way in which they assess and evaluate the world around them. This in turn alters the value assumptions of the status quo because as noted previously that which is serviceable is frequently granted

²¹ The fight over reproductive rights and access to abortion and birth control illustrates how a change in valuation can lead to a vociferous and sometimes violent backlash. Abortion clinics have been bombed; clinic workers have been assaulted and killed; efforts have been undertaken to change abortion laws at all levels of government. For a detailed examination of this issue see for example Celeste Michelle Condit, Decoding Abortion Rhetoric (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994). Randall A. Lake, "Order and Disorder in Anti-Abortion Rhetoric: A Logological View," Quarterly Journal of Speech 70 (1984).

moral worth, and as the serviceable changes, one's system of values will necessarily be altered.

While the above examples illustrate that orientations, and hence values, can be altered rapidly under certain circumstances, orientations also gradually evolve over time. When a person's orientation absorbs the shock of new revelations through the process of casuistic stretching, one's orientation will necessarily evolve as one linguistically adjusts his understanding of self and society and of all their derivative relationships. Many times this evolution is imperceptible as it is occurring, and people will not realize that they have become substantially different people in the process. The symbols we utilize provide a means by which people can reconcile beliefs, values, attitudes and/or behaviors that are inconsistent with each other. However, this process necessarily alters how one evaluates the world as each new addition brings with it additional constraints on future actions and valuations, and the synergistic relationship between the differing elements of the orientation frequently results in unintended consequences in the symbolic and/or the physical realm of existence. These irruptions further embroil one's orientation, which is what makes a person's understanding of the world evolutionary in nature.

For Burke, how one responds to these daily assaults on her orientations will have an effect on the qualitative nature of the change that ensues. One can move to accept the new reality and adapt her belief structure in accordance with it and follow along with the general societal progression, or one can resist the change and attempt to return society to an earlier time, or the experience can precipitate a desire to move

into a direction that is different from the existing and pre-existing orientation. In all situations, a revaluation is occurring. The difference lies in the way in which the revaluation affects the person's interactions with other people and the broader social environment. In the first, the person is acting in accord with broader social trends and will likely have a strong identification with the social order and its symbols of authority.²² Alternatively the second will likely develop a sense of alienation from the broader culture and will withdraw and/or wage a battle to return the social order to its previous state. The fallacy of this act, however, is that the ideal state of the past can never be recreated. The metaphor of not being able to put the genie back into the bottle to refer to the inevitability of the existence of nuclear weapons is just as applicable here. Once an idea has been introduced into human existence, it will always remain a part of the social fabric. Even when ideas or value systems seemingly disappear into history, remnants of them are usually present in the current cultural and symbol systems, which means they can reemerge at any point when conditions change. In the final circumstance, the individual seeking an alternative change is similarly rejecting the current orientation and is alienated from the current order as well.²³

According to Burke, if the conflict between those who wish to return to a previous time or to maintain the status quo and those who advocate a progression into a new era grows to a critical mass, it can rive the foundations of the social order,

²² Both identification and symbols of authority will be discussed at greater length in chapters 7-9.

²³ It is important to note that alienation is not necessarily a bad thing. For Burke, it merely means that one does not identify with the current social order and its ideals. This phenomenon will be examined in greater detail in chapter 10.

which may cause the dominant social orientation to fragment. When this occurs, the embattled factions will grasp on to differing elements of the previous orientation (P&C 169) and attempt to retain the rights to the symbols of authority. In the ensuing symbolic—and sometimes physical—conflict efforts are made to reevaluate those symbols in order to give strategic advantage to one of the factions. Efforts will be made to devalue those symbols controlled by the opposition, while amplification will be used concomitantly to buttress the strength of the symbols under one’s own control.

Regardless of the way in which cultural change occurs, cultural lag will be present (Burke P&C 179). Cultural artifacts that were developed in response to a particular exigency can retain power long after the exigency has dissipated or been removed. An orientation “may survive from conditions for which it was fit into conditions for which it is unfit” (179). Even though it was once a positive force for humanity, the changing circumstances have rendered it obsolete and/or destructive to current circumstances. “[I]t’s fossilized existence may be prolonged, after it has become dangerous to the social body as a whole, if some group which profits by it controls the educative, legislative, and constabulary resources of the state” (179). The American obsession with gas-guzzling SUVs long after the harms of global warming were well documented is an example of the destructive potentialities of cultural lag that occurs when the monetary and status interest of some place the health

of the entire planet in jeopardy.²⁴ In some instances, the cultural lag can be a result of the human tendency to be averse to change and a desire to maintain coherence within in one's value system; however, it can also be a result of deliberate manipulations on the part of those in power. Frequently, if a valuation is bad for society but beneficial to the controlling class, it will retain its power in society (Burke P&C 179).

Conversely, elements of the prior symbolic order that did not retain their previous power in the revaluation do not disappear completely. They are still embedded in the social fabric and have the potential to regain cultural currency at a later time. Any later emergence, however, will always differ from its previous instantiation because the precise meanings of the lexicon can never be replicated outside of the social order from which they hail, and while "the expression of past eras survives in fragments" it is usually "without explicit reference to the situation in which it arose" (Burke ROM 111). This imprecision in meaning is one of the ways in which revaluation occurs as following generations of people overlay new understandings on previous terminologies, and once revered symbols can become repulsive to members of the social order or that which was once considered repulsive can gain social currency. The profuse number of etymological analyses done by Burke in his writings illustrates the ways in which lexicons take on contrary

²⁴ Studies indicate that the SUV is frequently seen as sign of social status. See for example Jessie X Fan and John R. Burton, "Students' Perception of Status-Conveying Goods," Financial Counseling and Planning 13.1 (2002). The Ford Motor Company has acknowledged that SUVs are harmful to the environment, but they have kept making them because they provide the most profit for the company. For further detail see Richard K. Olsen, "Living above It All: The Liminal Fantasy of Sport Utility Vehicle Advertisements," Envirotop: Studies in Environmental Rhetoric and Popular Culture, eds. Mark Meister and Phyllis Japp (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers 2002).

meanings. Hence, the weighting of the symbols are altered over time, and their ethical orientation is altered.

The Ethical Aspects of Language and Action

While there are a number of different definitions for both morals and ethics, and differing philosophical schools debate the distinctions between the two, Burke tends to use ethics and morals in a way consistent with two common dictionary definitions of the words. One meaning of morals is the value system of a given social order. When Burke discusses the emergence of the hortatory negative, he refers to it as tribal or the rules of conduct that regulates the given society. Ethics, on the other hand, is consistently used to reference situations where a value-based choice needs to be made by an individual. The critical element of both for Burke is that they explicate standards by which human interaction should occur. Both are central to Burkean theory because with options comes the necessity of judgment and choice. Hence, ethics and morals are critical to motives, which, of course, is a significant area of inquiry for Burke. Human motivation is driven, in part, by the social order in which one is born and lives and by the subsequent choice making that necessitates a valuation. Therefore, to understand Burke's sociological world-view and its symbolic component, it is necessary to interrogate the relationship between ethics and morals and the symbol systems from which they arise.

Critical to understanding the process of revaluation is seeing the relationship between one's ethical code and the symbol system that is being used to express it. Language is central because without symbols one would only be able to express the

most rudimentary value claims, such as if you physically attack me, I will fight back. Those moral claims that represent societal value structures are only possible because of a symbol system that allows one to think of a world that is not yet extant and evaluate it as preferable or as worse to the status quo. The great moralizers of the human race—religion, myth and ideology—are only possible because we have a symbol system that allows us to contemplate and express them. While Burke does not challenge the existence of a higher power, his discussions of logology illustrate the way in which symbol systems are implicated in human understanding of a God figure, which is what provides its power as a moralizing force and why history is rife with conflicts over who controls the interpretation of religious texts and their corresponding symbols of authority.

Burke grounds much of his discussion of ethics and morals in the uniquely symbolic concept of the negative (ROR 18; LAS 10). Burke details in great length the fact that the negative is not found in nature, and that many ideas that are a hortatory negative are linguistically turned into quasi-positives (LAS 11). This linguistic construct is significant because the propositional negative, X does not exist, provides the intellectual basis for the hortatory negative, the thou shall not. The hortatory negative is the foundation of the social order because it provides the framework through which relationships are established and conflicts are resolved. The moral and ethical codes arising from these hortatorical foundations define the boundaries of acceptable human action and proscribe punishments when those ambits are violated. This linguistic construct begins the process of an actual physical

transcendence. The social order²⁵ becomes more than just the sum of its parts. It is not merely an aggregate of isolated individuals; instead, society becomes a force in and of itself as the social order transcends the individual. The social order is not only deemed to be an instrumental good, it is also given a moral force of its own. In some instances, this moral force is derived from the relationship between the social order and a God of some sort, and the moral order is religiously based. However, in more secular societies the final level of transcendence does not end in a God figure, but instead an ideal of some sort. In the former Soviet Union, communist ideology played this role while in the United States the ideals expressed in the constitution become the final arbiter of the relationship between the state and the individual. In both instances, the ideal is more important than the physical manifestations of the social order itself. When reality fails to materialize in line with the ideal, the extant world is deemed to be inferior and in need of alteration. The ideal itself is not questioned because it is the foundation for the subsequent valuations. Without the transcendent ideal, the system of morals would not have the same force to compel obedience from its adherents.

Depending upon the particulars of a given social order, the relationship between differing actors and systems can alter the way in which transcendence occurs. In some orders, the leaders provide a transcendent step between the

²⁵ When I refer to the social order, it can mean any social organization that has the actual and symbolic power to compel the individuals who operate within it to follow its dictates. In contemporary society the dominant social order is the state, but historically it has taken a number of different forms, such as tribal, feudal, etc. A similar process can also occur internally within minority sects within a larger social organization. Groups such as cults can exact the same or a greater level of obedience from its members as a government can with its citizens. On a smaller scale the family unit also has this power.

individual and the social order. The transcendent movement occurs as follows: from the individual, through the leader(s), to the social order. At each level of abstraction greater power is imbued in the actor or system at the higher level. Hence, the power of the social order is greater than the leaders', which is greater than that of the populace. Conversely, in some systems the leader is granted more status than the apparatuses of the social order itself. It is because of the leader that the social order exists in the first place. The foundation of the modern state of Saudi Arabia illustrates this point. Multiple tribes were unified under one leader when King Ibn Saud married a daughter of each of the tribal leaders,²⁶ and this gives the royal family ultimate control of the order itself.

Historically the divine right to rule "granted" to European monarchies explicitly tied the moral force of the social order to a Godhead. The transcendent order moves from the individual through the leaders to the state²⁷ and finally to God. At each stage in this process a higher order of power is established. The individual has the right to control his behaviors, the leader has the right to control the state, the state has the right to control the populace, and finally, God has the right to control the universe. When the rights of the individual come into conflict with the higher social order, the transcendent nature of the expressed power relationship suggests that the individual will not likely prevail. The logic of the moral social order "is the determination to preserve the race at the expense of the individual" (Burke CS 23),

²⁶ Georgina Vestey, "How Desert Tribe Took Islam's Sacred Cities," The Daily Telegraph September 10 2004.

²⁷ The state and the leader are sometimes indistinct; for example, cult leaders such as Jim Jones and David Koresh are viewed as the supreme leader of the social order and the embodiment of the moral force of the order.

and consequently, the individual is symbolically (and sometimes literally) subsumed by the social order.

As powerful and consequential as the moral force derived from the hortatory negative is, the relationship between language and valuations extends to all aspects of symbol use. The mere utilization of symbols requires valuation. When we speak we always choose certain words over others. While the plethora of words from which we choose are known as synonyms, each word carries with it a distinct connotation that can slightly alter how it is understood. In addition, symbols are necessarily incomplete. Because symbols are generic in nature—they are abstract words that group similar things together under the same title—nuances of the specific situation are necessarily elided when it is translated into symbolic form that necessarily references more than a single thing (Burke ATH 248). Richard Coe describes this process. “For every abstraction is a sublation, which both conserves and transcends the concrete reality from which it was abstracted ("Defining Rhetoric" 45). When the word “cat” is used in a sentence, one is free to think of any cat and its unique characteristics. The particularities of the material cat are transcended symbolically as it is transformed into an ideal cat.²⁸ This process is fairly straightforward—the symbolic realm will always be an incomplete and/or distorted version of the material realm because substitution and abbreviation are an intrinsic element of symbol use (Burke LAS 7). At this base level, choices are constantly being made regarding

²⁸ By ideal cat, I do not mean the cat that is the warmest and softest and purrs the loudest. No value judgment is intended. The ideal cat could very well be the neighbor’s cat that yowls all night long and scratches at the walls. The ideal cat is merely the cat that the listener/reader envisions upon hearing/reading the word cat.

which elements of the material realm to include in the transition to the symbolic, which necessarily makes it ethical.

Once an ethical/moral claim is expressed linguistically, that claim remains in existence in the minds of those who have heard it and those to whom it has been relayed. Even if they do not agree with the premise of the moral claim, the mere expression of it can alter how people interpret behaviors of the self and of others and of social phenomena. This is one of the ways in which symbols can take on a force of their own that is distinct from the original context in which they were uttered. This move is a means by which language is itself a heuristic device because it allows people to imagine a world that does not exist. As such, any time an evaluation is expressed, it opens up the possibility that people will develop a new understanding of the extant world, which could be at odds with the originally expressed valuation. This is in part the reason why political actors work so hard to control how others “spin” their messages, which is another way of saying making an evaluation of the message under the guise of relaying it. Consider the following hypothetical example. The Federal Reserve Board decides to raise interest rates. This move is expressed in one newspaper headline as “Fed raises interest rates to stave off inflationary pressures.” The second headline says, “The raising of interest rates by the Fed relieves Wall Street.” In both of the examples, a number of interpretations could be made. In both, one could determine that the Federal Reserve Board is a positive entity that is looking out for the well-being of the American public. However, one could also interpret the former as expressing a negative evaluation of the state of the

economy, and one could see the second as expressing a class bias wherein what is good for wealthy stock holders is necessarily good for the American public, which of course could be positively or negatively evaluated. Both headlines, while purportedly portraying objective descriptions of reality, clearly suggest valuations.

The above example illustrates an enigmatic element of symbol systems. While reporters strive to neutrally and objectively report reality, such a task is a linguistic impossibility. This is the case for two reasons. First, words are necessarily weighted and carry implicit valuations. Second, descriptions of human action can never be neutral. For Burke, action necessarily implies a choice to be made and carried forth to fruition. Choice necessitates a value judgment; hence, action is *never* neutral. It is *always* ethical. Consequently, descriptions of human action will always imply a valuation because human action is by definition imbued with ethical decision making. Efforts to ban books in public schools are best understood as an attempt to prevent exposure to valuations that are contrary in some way with the valuation preferred by the censors. A common retort by those who object to book banning is that people's values are not so loosely held that mere exposure to a different value system will cause them to be altered. Both view points represent extremes that are not completely accurate. Being exposed to new ideas does not necessitate that one's views *will* change. However, it does present the possibility that one's views *could* change. The censor is fearful that a comparison between the two value-systems will cause his belief system to come up short, and the only way to prevent that from happening is by not allowing the new idea out into the open. Parents who eschew

public school for religious or home schooling in order to protect their children from secular humanism follow this same logic. If their children are not exposed to objectionable beliefs and behaviors, then they will be less likely to stray from the faith of their parents. The value system is protected by shielding it from competing systems of belief until it has had time to become more rigidly entrenched. That at least is the hope, and it sometimes works; however, symbol systems are not that readily controlled, and as Burke would say, “It’s more complicated than that.”

The ethical aspects of language run much deeper than the initial decisions of what to convert to the symbolic. The processes of substitution and abbreviation lay the groundwork for descriptors to take on a weighting, which is when seemingly neutral terms contain an implicit valuation (Burke ATH 240-242, 328). Burke believed, and I concur, that language is always weighted (P&C 162) and “intensely moral” (177). Even words that begin as mere descriptors take on an evaluative tone when the meaning of the symbols merge with people’s understanding of the referent. For example, garbage is a descriptive word that refers to human refuse; however, because refuse is frequently associated with that which is dirty and valueless, the term garbage and associated terms such as trash take on negative connotations. This linguistic move begets another transition in which the term garbage is expanded metaphorically to refer to people who are devalued in the eyes of others. The phrase “white trash” is but the logical outgrowth of this process.

The discussion in contemporary political discourse of “code” words illustrates how this process can be used strategically to send a message to a particular sub-group

while appearing neutral to those who are not privy to the valuation that is occurring or allows them symbolic cover to not acknowledge the valuation. Many argue that when Ronald Reagan began his presidential campaign in Philadelphia, Mississippi—the location of the grisly murder of three civil rights’ workers in the 1960’s that inspired the film *Mississippi Burning*—under the banner of states’ rights, this process occurred. At the time many in the larger nation did not understand (or perhaps did not care) that states’ rights, was being euphemistically used to express the message that the Reagan administration would leave race relations to be dealt with by the local communities.²⁹ Given the history of how Jim Crow, lynching, knight riders, the KKK etc. were allowed to flourish in Southern states and the way in which the term states’ rights was used to prevent the federal government from ending the practices,³⁰ his speech offered tacit support for the views of white supremacy that underlie the previous examples. Hence, neutral vocabularies can function to obfuscate underlying valuations because much valuation is implicit in discourse without being expressly

²⁹ The evidence that this was a deliberate effort to use racial tensions to encourage Southern Democrats to switch to the Republican Party is compelling. The New York Times editorialist Bob Hebert points to a 1981 interview with Republican strategist Lee Atwater wherein he stated “You start out in 1954 by saying, ‘Nigger, nigger, nigger,’ ” said Atwater. “By 1968, you can’t say ‘nigger’ — that hurts you. Backfires. So you say stuff like forced busing, states’ rights, and all that stuff. You’re getting so abstract now [that] you’re talking about cutting taxes, and all these things you’re talking about are totally economic things, and a byproduct of them is [that] blacks get hurt worse than whites.” Bob Herbert, “The Ugly Side of the Gop,” *The New York Times* September 25 2007. That Reagan’s effort was purposeful is also supported by the historical record that then Mississippi Congressman Trent Lott was one of the people who encouraged Reagan to open his campaign in this location with message. See Jack White, “Lott, Reagan and Republican Racism,” *Time* December 14 2002. In 2005, Ken Mehlman, the Republican National Committee Chair, issued an apology for the party’s exploitation of racial strife to gain white voters in the South. For a description of his apology see Richard Benedetto, “Gop: “We Were Wrong” To Play Racial Politics,” *USA Today* July 14 2005.

³⁰ The term states’ rights was historically used to disallow the federal government from preventing violence against Blacks in Southern States. For a historical account of how it was used by Southern Senators in their arguments to stop federal anti-lynching laws from being enacted see David O. Walter, “Legislative Notes and Reviews: Proposals for a Federal Anti-Lynching Law,” *The American Political Science Review* 28.3 (1934).

stated or advocated (Burke P&C 254), which allows rhetors to send differing messages to different members of the same audience.

Naming and labeling provides an easily observable manifestation of how weighted words operate, which is why Burke contends that the act of naming is necessarily a moral act (ATH 342). The names we give to things and/or people act to define them in a particular way, and the valuation implicit within the definition shapes how one views the relationship between the named and its social and physical environment (4). The act of naming also alters the power relationship among the namer, the named, and the larger social environment. History is rife with socio-political conflicts whose genesis is a battle over what things or people ought to be called; these conflicts emerge when the differing names necessitate a different valuation be made. A number of current conflicts illustrate this process and why it can elicit such a vehement response from those engaged in the linguistic struggle to determine what something/one ought to be called.

Terrorist or freedom fighter; illegal alien or undocumented worker; marriage or civil union. Each of these examples illustrates a rhetorical battle not only over which name to use, but also over how each pairing ought to be evaluated. When one chooses a particular label, she also endorses the value judgments implicit in the name being used. Osama bin Laden is reviled by Western nations because he is an enemy of the state and of the people who is willing to slaughter thousands of innocents in order to settle a political grudge. However, throughout much of the Muslim world, he is revered by many as a leader who is justly fighting an imperial power and defending

the God given rights of Muslims. Others reject the dominant labels and view bin Laden as a criminal who should be dealt with by the criminal justice system instead of the military. The consequences of the choice of valuation could not be more serious. Implicit in each valuation is an entelechial push that can fundamentally alter individual choices. A Muslim who believes bin Laden is operating on God's command is more easily swayed to strap explosives to his body and detonate them in a crowded area. Conversely, many Americans so reviled him and what he stands for that they were willing to invade Iraq on the faintest of evidence that Saddam Hussein was working with bin Laden. Value judgments always have consequences in the social and physical world because our behaviors are determined by the value judgments that we make. The way we treat others, the way we treat ourselves, and the way we treat social institutions are all actions that are determined by our values.

What the preceding analysis illustrates is that our being is deeply infused with valuations. Our orientations determine how we understand the world, which always involves valuing some things at the expense of others, and the language we use always expresses a value judgment. The purpose of this chapter was to outline at a meta-level that we are necessarily ethical beings who cannot escape making value judgments. This, however, is not sufficient to explain how individuals and social orders develop particular, expressed moral codes that are used to compel particular behaviors and attitudes. Before my analysis moves to this primary question, a second meta-level analysis is necessary—the relationship between moral and aesthetic valuation. Burke equates the two processes, and in the next chapter, I examine the

ways in which our moral judgments are influenced by the aesthetic appeal of symbols.

Chapter 3: The Relationship between Moral and Aesthetic Valuation

Burke's writings about valuation discuss a variety of contexts in which (re)valuation can occur, and in many cases he uses his examples interchangeably among the realms. This is to a large degree because Burke does not see a significant distinction in the symbolic aspects of those things that are valued based upon a moral/ethical system and those that are based upon aesthetic appeal. In fact, he believes that "one may reasonably expect to find the same symbolic factors" in play in the ethical realm as in "the realm of the aesthetic" (Burke P&C 254).

Aesthetical values are intermingled with ethical values—and the ethical is the basis of the practical. Or, put more simply: our ideas of the beautiful, the curious, the interesting, the unpleasant, the boring are closely bound with our ideas of the good, the desirable, the undesirable—and our ideas of the desirable and undesirable have much to do with our attitudes towards our everyday activities. (Burke PLF 201)

Burke saw the same linguistic processes at play in both spheres of symbol use. Artistic expression is always related to the real world in one way or another. It may be a reproduction or an ideal, but all art expresses a sense of what the world is or what it could be, either positive or negative. As such, one would expect the symbolic valuation of the aesthetic to follow a similar path as that of ethical valuation. Burke states the relationship as life being an informal art (P&C 254). People are drawn

toward pieces of art because they appeal to them; people are also drawn to other people because they appeal to them. Hence, “social life, like art, is a problem of appeal” (264). While one can logically construct a compelling case that matters of ethics are primary to matters of aesthetics, at a purely symbolic and motivational level they function in a similar way. Michael Feehan argues the entire purpose of Burke’s theory of dramatism was an effort to create a united theory of “his aesthetic and political perspectives” (“Dramatism” 405).

Burke supports this connection between the moral and the aesthetic by drawing upon the theories of Cicero—a classical rhetorician. Analyzing Cicero’s three offices of the orator—to teach, to please, and to move—he argues that the relationship between the aesthetic and the rhetorical has long been recognized (SOM 37-8). A rhetor must always be mindful of “keeping his audience sufficiently amused so that they will continue to be an audience” (38). However, this basic understanding of the second office is insufficient in Burke’s mind, and it “must be greatly expanded beyond so rudimentary a notion of the pleasurable” (38). Since humans are “the typically language-using species,” we have the capacity to take an “intrinsic delight in the sheer exercising” of our linguistic capabilities (38). As such, the idea “that the solving of problems in physics can be ‘beautiful,’ or that there can be something ‘aesthetic’ in ‘science,’ would seem to involve our proposal for widening the scope of Cicero’s second office to include the sheer delight in symbolic unfolding for its own sake” (39). Hence, one frequently finds aesthetic appeal in that which is meant to be rhetorical, and the conceptual slippage that exists in symbol systems suggests that this

same phenomenon occurs in the reverse—from the aesthetic to the rhetorical. This overlap of the poetic and ethical is best explained by two elements of Burke's theory: pieties and form.

Pieties

Burke extends the notion of piety from the religious context to explain systems of relationships that delimit that which we understand to be good from that which we understand as bad. As such, pieties are the building blocks of an orientation and explain what goes with what and what goes against what (P&C 74, 76, 204). They define friend and foe, likes and dislikes, pleasure and pain, etc.; hence, pieties lay the framework for all systems of evaluation, including at the subconscious level. They infiltrate and guide our very being in such a way that people make implicit valuations without being cognizant of the mental feat being completed (P&C 75). From Burke's perspective, this process is the same in the realm of morals and aesthetics, which is what allows for the slippage between the two (1). While not all pieties implicate one's core being, the choices we make are always driven by our sense of the pious and the impious. Because pieties are foundational, they shape the potential alternatives that one can choose from in any given situation. This generative element of pieties illuminates the force that they have on all human interactions. While the ramifications of pieties in the aesthetic realm are seldom as consequential as those in the ethical, challenges to them can cause as distinct physical and emotional responses as when one's ethical system is contested.

One's pieties can be traced to experiences and interactions that she has had during her existence, and interactions with others of the same value system work to reinforce and perpetuate one's pieties (Burke P&C 78-9). As such, they are always tied to a part of one's past in some way (74). While this provides one a sense of stability in interacting with the world, it can become problematic when one's pieties become so calcified as to be unable to respond in a helpful manner to new exigencies. A formula for evaluating circumstances may become outdated and harmful when used in a world that is no longer consistent with one's value assumptions. The failure of one's pious system of beliefs to adapt to newly emergent exigencies can lay the groundwork for a sense of alienation from the broader society, which can also precipitate a revaluation of one's values.

People are emotionally vested in their pieties even sometimes when they have become pathological. When the utilitarian reality of one's existence contradicts one's pious value system, it can be painful, both physically and/or emotionally (Burke P&C 74). The desire of many to maintain a deep tan year-round long after the connection between skin cancer and sun exposure had been well-documented illustrates this point. In spite of the fact that tanning carries with it a substantial risk, many still feel "healthier" when they are bronzed.³¹ In this example, the desire to stay consistent with one's aesthetic preference for being golden brown can literally bring death and disease to the physical body. Pieties seem beneficial or at least necessary to their holder, but in reality they can either guide or misguide one's choices (P&C 76). When

³¹ To see the magnitude of this phenomenon see Karen Springen, "Dying to Be Tan," Newsweek June 28 2005.

one's pieties overwhelm what is healthy for the physical or mental health of their holder, significant angst can result because pieties are a "yearning to conform with the 'sources of one's being'" (69), and a need for a revaluation may ensue.

Any revaluation of values is necessarily impious because it challenges one's value system, even if the value in question is seemingly inconsequential (Burke P&C 80). It is impossible to predict with any degree of certainty what effect a minor modification to one's pieties can have on the system as a whole. This is significant because it suggests that a change in one's aesthetic judgments could affect in potentially profound ways a person's broader orientation, which is part of the reason Burke does not draw clean distinctions between ethical and aesthetic valuation. He contends that pieties respond to "analogies of situation or relationship" and not to the object or person being evaluated (148). This suggests that our evaluations of lived experience and artistic expression are closely related. One may be drawn to works of art that challenge contemporary notions of the aesthetic because he is or has a desire to be rebellious in his own life. Hence, what in the realm of art is judged as aesthetically pleasing might be deemed in one's existential reality as an ethical act of fighting an unfair system. For Burke, the line between the two will never be neat and distinct; rather it will always be a blurry shade of gray.

...truth in art is not the discovery of facts, not an addition to human knowledge in the scientific sense of the word. It is, rather, the exercise of human propriety, the formulation of symbols which rigidify our sense of poise and rhythm. (Burke CS 42)

This leads Burke to see transference between the two realms and argue that it is probable that something that is aesthetically pleasing will be adjudged as morally correct and vice versa. As such, the aesthetic realm always has political implications (114). It is at this point that “we come upon the centre, where rhetoric and poetic coalesce, where the intrinsic radiance of an aesthetic object has social implications in its very essence” (SOM 18). The religious right’s campaign to denigrate Hollywood as a den of iniquity illustrates this principle. Because the beautiful stars of popular culture are deemed aesthetically pleasing, the fear of conservatives is that Hollywood’s supposed liberal leanings will undermine the traditional value structure of America, i.e. the nation’s orientation.

This interrelationship between the realm of the aesthetic and of the ethical is further clarified by Burke in his essay “Literature as Equipment for Living” (PLF 253-262). Literature becomes a way to expose different types of attitudinal responses to differing social circumstance. It charts myriad social experiences and provides the auditor with strategies for dealing with similar types of occurrences when they are encountered in her actual life (253-5). Artists are frequently inspired by “extra-aesthetic tensions in the social order” (SOM 45) as a source for the content of their works. Consequently, the genius of “symbol using, heads in the thou-shall-nots of the ethical, proscriptions shaped with regard to the given social order and its corresponding kinds of ownership, expectancy and obligation” (45). Hence, “all such ‘values’ provide material for ‘free’ use in a work of art” (45). As such, artistic expression is frequently one of the first places where discord within a value system is

expressed symbolically, and it provides a venue in which to explore the possibility of a new order. An intrinsic relationship exists between the aesthetic and the ethical as the form of the aesthetic can subsume that of the political (CS 113).

I believe that Burke was correct in his assumptions about the symbolic interrelationship between the differing realms of human symbol use, and technological changes in society have made this interaction even more pronounced. “Technology is not something that is distinct from the environment or just another tool in our environment. Technology is our environment” (Cathcart 289-90). Technological advances and new mediums of expression have magnified the number of fictional messages a person encounters on a daily basis, and the line between fiction and reality is being further muddled. Already thin supermodels are airbrushed to make their bodies fit an ideal type of the female figure while infotainment blurs the line between entertainment and news reporting. Celebrity gossip is deemed more newsworthy than stories of pressing national concern if one examines the sheer volume of coverage the two types of news receive on cable news programs.³² This functional blending of the aesthetic and ethical has the potential to have severe repercussions on the social order. When a belief has unacceptable consequences for an order, the “aesthetic can be a temporary way of using art to avoid the accurate contemplation of the non-aesthetic elements” (Burke SOM 14). Not only do the formal symbolic overlays between the realms exist, a merging of the substance of the

³² According to survey data 87% of the public believes that too much time is devoted to coverage of celebrity gossip in lieu of hard news. See The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Public Blames Media for Too Much Celebrity Coverage, August 2 2007, Available: <http://people-press.org/report/346/public-blames-media-for-too-much-celebrity-coverage>, July 21 2008.

two types of valuation is also occurring. Consequently, it is necessary to understand style and artistic truth if one is to understand the process of revaluation.

For Burke, style and artistic proof are intimately intertwined concepts. He argues that style is the ability to do the “right” thing (P&C 269-70 note 2). What is aesthetically pleasing is that which conforms to the norms of the social order or challenges them in a socially acceptable manner. When disagreement occurs over the aesthetic value of a work, there is frequently an underlying conflict regarding the moral and ethical as well. When Andres Serrano’s “Piss Christ,” which showed a crucifix submerged in urine, and Robert Maplethorpe’s retrospective, which included homoerotic and sado-masochistical imagery, created public controversy in the late 1980s, the United States Senate deemed the works to be without artistic merit.³³ However, standard questions of style and aesthetics were not addressed. Color, lighting, arrangement, thought provoking imagery, etc. were not mentioned.³⁴ Instead, the works were declared obscene and blasphemous. While content is part of the aesthetic quality of any work, it is commonly evaluated on how well the content functions to express the ideas in the art. However, in this example, the criticisms treated the aesthetic aspects of the work as if they were rhetorical. In the view of the critics, the two were synonymous; because the pieces had an *offensive rhetorical* message in the view of the critics, they could have *no aesthetic* value. The moral and the aesthetic were treated as one and the same.

³³ For further detail on the controversy see Roy Shaw, "Hanging Judges," The Guardian December 2 1989.

³⁴ For a detailed discussion of the elements generally included in art criticism see Terry Barrett, Why is That Art: Aesthetics and Criticism of Contemporary Art (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

The above example illustrates the potential symbolic slippage between the realms of the moral and the aesthetic, and this phenomenon requires further interrogation. If the aesthetic and the ethical can be symbolically interchanged in the arena of pieties, it becomes imperative to understand how aesthetic proofs function as part of one's orientation. "Art, one of the nine cultural potentialities Burke attributes to mankind, thereby becomes one of the nine channels through which man can re-individuate himself" (Gallo 36). For Burke, *all* communication retains vestiges of the poetic (Burke CS 168), which allows aesthetic truths to bind together the narrative of human life, and under certain circumstances they can be used interchangeably with truths dictated by one's moral code. The use of music to express spiritual transcendence in many religions is the ritualized combining of the ethical and the aesthetic. One may enjoy a particular hymn because it feels uplifting as the ethical message and the rhythm of the song combine together synergistically to create an all encompassing emotional, physical and intellectual experience. The transcendent feeling of the moment is spurred by the symbolic merging of the aesthetic and moral, which for Burke is a formal quality.

Forms

Forms, which are the symbolic "arousing and fulfillment of desires" (Burke CS 124) are an element of symbolism that have historically been seen as part of both the aesthetic and the rhetorical. As such, they help to illustrate the ways in which the purely symbolic affects our understanding and valuation of the external world and our overall orientation. It has been noted that Burke's expression of form can seem

confusing because sometimes “he seems to mean form in the sense of archetype or norm,” such as “universal patterns of experience” or “recurrent emotions” (Gallo 36). While at other times, he seems to “refer to architectural principles, frameworks or a skeletal structure” (36). For Burke, these two elements cannot be separated; they work together to create the effect within the audience. “Form is an act of giving shape to an idea; knowing what goes with what and how ideas modify and transform one another through arrangement” (Heath 397). In other words, form gives rhetorical force to ideas through the artful manipulation of pieties. As such, form “is not only aesthetic but social and psychological as well, even historical” (Sheard 295) and is shaped by “culturally imposed criteria for thinking” (Gronbeck “Celluloid” 41).

The pieties that shape the implementation of forms are culturally specific and the nature of form will vary across culture and time. However, the way they function psychologically remains the same. Specifically, forms function similarly to an enthymeme wherein the audience “collaborates” in the creation of meaning (Burks 261). For Burke, forms function psychologically by creating expectations that the audience desires to see fulfilled (Rod 307). Burke outlines four types of forms that are skeletal structures that need to be fleshed out with cultural particulars. They are syllogistic, qualitative, repetitive, and conventional. In the first, the conclusions necessarily follow from premises already outlined; in the second, the presence of one quality puts one in a state of mind or prepares us for the transference to another state; the third is the consistent maintaining of the same principles under new guises, and the fourth refers to a situation wherein the form itself is what is rhetorically appealing

regardless of the content of the message (Burke CS 124-7). Each of these forms is utilized to construct a narrative of the subject at hand, which increases its symbolic power by encouraging a particular progression of thought based upon the form itself. The forms function by creating a sense of expectancy for how things should turn-out to be. Consider the standard horror movie in America. The horrific behaviors are almost always preceded by music, which creates a sense of anxiety to make the audience more afraid of the subsequent acts. If the scary monster does not appear following the music, the audience may feel a sense of being let down. Hence, formally charged symbols act not just by causing an expectation of what is to follow but also by creating a desire for a particular outcome (Burke SOM 47).³⁵

³⁵ Burke's conception of form has been criticized by some as too limiting. Cathcart notes that Burke based his exposition of the four types of forms largely from a written work that assumes a linear progression of thought Robert S. Cathcart, "Extensions of the Burkean System," Extensions of the Burkean System, ed. James W. Chesebro (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993). 298-99. However, he acknowledges that Burke's notion still serve an important function and can be adapted to an increasingly visually driven world. He argues that what makes dramatism as a theory especially applicable to a mass mediated world "is its focus on form rather than content alone to reveal the process of symbolic action" Cathcart, "Extensions of the Burkean System." 303.

A second criticism of Burke's theory of form comes from James Chesebro who questions whether Burke's notion of form can account for a non-Western audience. He analyzes a speech by Pedro Albizu Campos and argues that none of Burke's four types of form accurately represent the rhetorical maneuvers used in the speech James W. Chesebro, "Multiculturalism and the Burkean System: Limitations and Extensions," Kenneth Burke and the 21st Century, ed. Bernard L. Brock (Albany State University of New York Press, 1999). 174-76. Specifically, he argues that Burkes forms are too linear to account for the more spiral nature of Campos' rhetoric (176-83). I, in part, disagree with Chesebro's position. Specifically, I believe qualitative form accounts for the spiral nature of Campos's rhetoric because the qualitative uses one quality to prepare the audience to accept another quality. He argues this form is not applicable because he moves from painting the audience as docile and then concludes by calling for a revolution, and hence, constructing the audience as powerful (174). It is important to remember that the functioning of form is reliant upon what the audience brings with them in interpreting the message. It is possible that a non-western audience would view the spiral nature of the speech and the disjunction of the beginning and end as being connected in a qualitative way.

However, even if I am wrong in this assessment, I think the general basis of Burke's notion of forms as they relate to valuation are correct even in the face of Cathcart and Chesebro's criticism. Even if the four particular types of forms outlined by Burke are insufficient to account for a mass mediated world and a multi-cultural audience, the more abstract notion of the power of forms is not undercut. It merely suggests that his theory needs to be expanded to include more types of forms; it

Symbols can be said to be formally charged when the power of the communicative act is increased based upon the form that is utilized. When this occurs in artistic expression it is generally viewed as illustrating the talent of the artist. However, the effects of form are not limited to the realm of the aesthetic. They also play a significant role in the realm of the rhetorical and can have the effect of pushing ideas and value judgments based upon the form in which they are delivered as opposed to their intellectual strength.

John Murphy illustrates this phenomenon in his discussion of President Bush's rhetoric following 9-11. He argues that Bush used the epideictic form to push policy decisions in a way that undercut critics' ability to question the efficacy and moral value of the policies ("Mission" 617). In many ways, the policy of preemptive war was anathema to traditional American values. However, the rhetorical strategies used provided the means to make the transvaluation of values that occurred appear to be a logical continuation of the values that the doctrine repudiated. This is one way in which the use of formally charged rhetoric can facilitate the alteration of value systems within a social order. By maintaining the preferred form, it is possible for the rhetor to alter the ideas being discussed in significant ways without appearing to be offering revolutionary ideas, and as Weier argues "through the appeal of form a rhetor entices auditors to surrender to a text's structuring of reality" (247).

The use of form can also function to maintain value systems. The use of rituals in religious ceremonies and the power found within those rites illustrates this

does not deny that formal aspects of communication play a significant role in the way in which symbols systems function to maintain and/or alter value systems.

point. Even though sects of Christianity believe in the Bible and the God figure expressed therein, the form in which the values are expressed and promulgated vary significantly among denominations. The stoic nature of a Lutheran church service can be appealing because of the feeling of calm it provides. In contrast, a Southern Baptist revival can be appealing because of the outward expression of strong emotions. Gronbeck argues that Burke's conception of form redefines meaning to include "the kinds of understanding that are possible because of what audiences bring to" the encounter ("Tradition" 361-2). As such, Burke's conception of form suggests that those who prefer one form of religious expression over another are unlikely to change to a denomination that utilizes a significantly different form because it falls outside of their formal expectation of what a church service should be, and when the formal expectations of the religious experience are met, it can help provide the continuity necessary to help people maintain their faith.

Formal appeal can also work to alter one's value structures. For example, some people feel alienated by the form of worship done in the church in which they were raised and seek out a church in which they feel more at home. While this is sometimes a matter of church doctrine, such as whether or not a church is accepting of homosexuals, it can also be based upon the formal aspects of the church and the ways in which the beliefs are expressed rhetorically. If the formal elements of worship lead a person to change denominations, there will likely be a concomitant alteration in the value system of the individual. The appeal and draw of the form occurs in part through identification (Burks 262). As will be explicated in greater

detail in chapter eight, identification with one aspect of a person, idea or activity can easily lead to identification with whole of the person, idea or activity. As such, the draw of form can facilitate an alteration in values when a person identifies with an element unrelated to the value per se, but the identification allows the differing value stance to be viewed in a positive light. The draw of the form can become so appealing that people actually crave the form regardless of the content of the message. This has two significant implications for valuation that I will highlight.

In this chapter, I endeavored to explain the interrelationship between aesthetic and moral valuation in realm of pieties and form to illustrate the ways in which conceptual slippage can occur between the two realms. In the remaining chapters, I turn to the key terms of moral and aesthetic valuation highlighted by Burke to unpack his theory of how values are formed and altered by individuals and social orders. I will draw upon the theories outlined in chapters two and three to explicate the symbolic processes that undergird the functioning of the key terms. The following chapters are organized to show how valuations move from the social to the individual and back to the social via symbol systems.

Chapter 4: The Collective Poems of Socio-Economic Organization

By highlighting the collective poems of socio-economic organization, a key term which is central to understand the process of moral and aesthetic evaluation, Burke placed the interaction between the individual and the social order as a primary element in all valuation. He was always cognizant of the interrelationship between the individual and the culture in which she resides because individual actions always have implications for the broader social order, and actions taken by social institutions always have effects on the individual.³⁶ Moral valuation, specifically, prescribes a view of how the world ought to function and how people ought to behave. Hence, an underlying element of all moral valuation is necessarily social because it prescribes what people's relationships with others ought to look like. When Burke discusses the collective poems of socio-economic organization in relationship to valuation, he is referring to "the total frames of thought and action," (Burke ATH 99) and "the productive and mental patterns developed by aggregates" (111). He breaks the major aggregates of Western civilization into the "roughly classifiable...heads of primitive evangelism (in the midst of Hellenistic decay), mediaeval theocracy, Protestantism, capitalism, and socialism" (99). In a sense, he is focusing on the ways in which humans have grouped and regrouped themselves throughout large swaths of history. This focus does not deny the import of individual actions; "the two emphases are not mutually exclusive, since the individual's frame is built of materials from the

³⁶ I do not mean to argue that the effects that occur are necessarily planned; what I do mean is that all actions have effects that go beyond the individual involved. The social effects may be limited to the person's immediate relations, but people cannot live in isolation in a modern, industrialized nation. As such, one must always examine the interaction between the individual and the broader social environment.

collective frame” (111). While these broad patterns cannot tell us exactly how any given individual will respond to a particular exigency, the abstractions allow one to see recurrent patterns of thoughts and behaviors (P&C 112, 219). It could be argued that Burke’s breakdown of Western civilization is a bit esoteric, and one would probably have to agree with that statement. However, what is important for the purpose of this analysis is the broader idea that the major organizing principles of a cultural era will have a significant impact on the way in which social orders and the individuals who comprise them will value the world around them.

While much post-modern thought has rejected the notion of universal categories, Burke’s thinking provides a means to reconcile the criticisms of universal truths with a belief that recurring patterns of thought and behavior *can* and *do* exist. Burke suggests that while the particulars of any given value judgment will be distinct, the symbolic patterns and processes that are used while making and expressing the valuations tend to follow similar trajectories. This notion is significant because it allows one to create categories of thoughts and processes that provide a more holistic understanding of valuations while at the same time recognizing that universal claims always have particular applications. He notes that statistical trends illustrate generic motives that drive a particular social unit. However, “the new causal interpretation obtained statistically will have the incongruous qualities of perspective, since it offers a generic motive distinct from the motives experienced by the members of migration as individuals” (P&C 219). Hence, the motives of individuals within that demographic can be distinct from that of the aggregate. However, it is the area of

overlap between the universal principle and the specific application that provides some of the greatest insight into the workings of human valuations. A casual glance at the differing ways in which Christianity has been applied in its different manifestations illustrates this point. While different denominations recognize the universal truth of the Bible, how those truths are negotiated when applied to specific situations is distinct. In fact, a number of splits within Christendom have occurred because of disagreements about how the truth of the Bible ought to be understood as it interacted with the particular circumstances of the time, place, and populace.

Similar to much postmodern thought, Burke rejects the notion of universal truths that arise from metaphysical inquiries (CS 48), but he does believe that certain universal claims can be made. Burke believes that human existence has “‘progressed’ in cultural cycles which repeat themselves in essence (in form) despite the limitless variety of specific details to embody such essences or forms” (48). For example, every war over resources is necessarily particular in its application as the resource(s) in question may be different and varying cultural expectations regarding warfare and diplomacy will alter how the conflict is conducted. However, the push to war over scarce resources is a universal possibility. The foundation of universals, for Burke, are those things for which humans have inborn psychological potential (48). This understanding of universal claims is important because it provides a means of understanding those elements of human behavior that can arise in *any* particularized cultural setting, which provides a systematic framework for analyzing and understanding the human condition in all of its manifestations. Differing cultures will

always have distinct moral and ethical codes, but the genesis of those codes necessarily includes those elements of human existence that are universal.

Because of the significance of this part of Burkean thought, it is necessary to unpack what elements of human existence that he sees as being universal in nature. Burke believes that patterns of experience that recur are universal. These experiences include such things as moods, feelings, emotions, perceptions, sensations, attitudes, etc. (CS 149). I do not mean to imply that a person's emotional reaction to a situation is universal, but instead the possibility of having a similar emotional reaction provides its universality. For example, whether one views the execution of a convicted murderer with satisfaction for justice being served or an abomination of state sanctioned violence is irrelevant to Burke's notion of universality. What does matter is that all people have the potential to have feelings of both satisfaction and of abomination. Because we all have the potential to possess either of those feelings, the feelings themselves are universal; however, what causes either of those feelings to emerge in an individual is always a product of the particular situation (CS 150).

Burke sees a constant interaction between the individual and the social order. While the particulars of each person's life are distinct, the symbolic patterns that are used to shape and understand one's experiences remain the same. Symbolic patterns form from the interactions between people and their environment, and these patterns are frequently repeated, which provides the basis for a universal understanding of symbolic action (CS 151). When individuals adopt extant cultural forms, their orientations are necessarily shaped by those forms (151). While many cultural forms

can become and remain a powerful force in shaping one's orientation, nothing guarantees that the pattern will move beyond the ephemeral and influence symbolic action (152). Nevertheless, when forms gain cultural currency over an extended period of time, they come to be seen as natural (LAS 13) or in some situations as a dictate from a higher power. For example, the enslavement of Africans was justified by some as God's preferred order of human society, and this belief retained its power for over two centuries. The notion that men were rightful leaders of the household and of society lasted for literally millennia and still retains its force in much of the modern world.

Since for Burke the universal is always particular in its application, the significant question that arises is how do individual people and societies negotiate the universal forms with their specific circumstances? While Burke provides a partial answer to this question, it is far from complete. In his own works he examines cultural artifacts as a means to determine the underlying motivational states implicit in them because he believes that people's understandings of the world can be determined in part by the symbols that they use to describe it, which is consistent with his belief that symbols are a verbal parallel to recurrent patterns of experience (CS 152), and hence, the symbol itself is a formula that is utilized to provide meaning and cogency to a seemingly irrational and chaotic world (153). But symbol systems evolve over time, and the constant push of the physical and social world can undermine the ability of our chosen form to retain its explanative and organizational power. Nevertheless, the formal function of the symbol system can be analyzed at a

number of distinct cultural locations to understand the interrelationship between symbols, the human user, and the social systems in which they operate. Burke argues that nine sites exist in which people reindividuate their specific experiences into cultural patterns wherein the external application changes, but the essence does not. The sites are as follows: speech, tools, art, mythology, religion, social systems, property, government, and war (48).³⁷

At each of the aforementioned cultural locations, the individual is provided with an opportunity to define himself in relationship to his external world. However, it must not be forgotten that the interaction between the individual and the cultural forms is not a one-way street. The individual can have an impact on the broader culture, but his worldview will always be altered by the recalcitrance of the already existing order (Burke P&C 258). I do not mean to claim that the individual cannot alter the extant social order; history is replete with examples where individuals have had such effects. What is important to note is that the relationship is always synergistic. While the form itself is not altered per se, its particular application is changed by the way it is understood and used by people at a specific time and location. One way in which this occurs is via the educational system wherein universals are individuated and channeled into particular cultural constructs (CS 57). Under closed systems such as the former Soviet Union, North Korea, and China, the educational system is utilized to propagate one unifying vision of the world that justifies the actions of the current regime. China has gone so far as to eliminate

³⁷ These sites also provide the source for most of a given order's symbols of authority, which will be examined in greater detail in chapters 7-9. For now, it is sufficient to understand that certain cultural locations have a greater force on individuals than other sites might.

access to internet sites that call into question the values expressed by the government.³⁸ However, even under these systems, the populous is not necessarily unified in its support of the regime. But the ability to control access to ideas that are contrary to the regime's interests does make it more difficult for oppositional ideas to be developed and expressed.³⁹

Part of the formal power of each of the nine cultural locations noted by Burke is that they each have the ability to channel people's emotions. For example, when the United States was attacked by terrorists on September 11, 2001, the nation as a whole responded in an emotional manner. As a nation, we were afraid and wanted to exact revenge (justice) on those who perpetuated the atrocity. These emotions were channeled into symbolic forms that shaped the national debate over how we ought to respond to the situation. Burke argues when emotions are transferred into symbols, those symbols develop a generative force (CS 61), which shapes future understandings and actions. The emotions following 9-11 merged into visions of who terrorists are and what they want to do to the United States and its citizens. However, the symbolic instantiation was less than precise as the fear and anger following 9-11 created an image of terrorists who could emerge from any locale in South or Southwest Asia and exact an unacceptable toll of lost American lives. This symbolic

³⁸ For more detail about China's efforts to curtail access to the internet see Patricia Maunder, "The Great Firewall of China," The Age March 20 2008.

³⁹ Of course the fear of physical violence and repression plays a role in this phenomenon, but on a strictly symbolic level it is more difficult to develop contrary ideas or responses to the regime without access to the multiplicity of ideas that have already been expressed on the subject. A quick look at formative documents in the United States such as the Federalist Papers illustrates the way in which historical events that occurred in other nations shaped how our founding fathers understood promises and perils of a democratic regime.

instantiation is in part what allowed for a preemptive attack in 2003 on the nation of Iraq, which had no discernable connection to terrorist activity directed at America and as a secular state was unlikely to ascribe to the fundamentalist Islamic beliefs held by those who did commit the acts on 9-11. One single act of terrorism, which killed far fewer people than such ordinary activities as driving a car or eating fast food do, allowed the notion of war as a last resort to be turned on its head. This is not to say that no one in America had previously supported the idea of preemptive war, but what it does indicate is the emotional force that emerged after 9-11 was channeled in such a way that the idea gained presence.⁴⁰ As Burke notes, new emotions and attitudes are not created in a social order, but the cluster of conditions present at a given time change the emphasis and hence the force of certain ideals (CS 121), and because each form stresses its own unique way of building the mental equipment by which people handle the significant factors of their times, the change in emphasis can have a significant effect on how people engage the world around them (ATH 34).

While this function of symbolicity may seem benign or even beneficial for helping humans order the external environment and their relationship to it, there is no guarantee that the consequences of this aspect of symbol use will be neutral or positive (Burke CS 151). It is here that Burke recognizes the import of valuation of one's extant world. While humans are incapable of completely controlling the physical and social environment, we do have the capacity to judge the ramifications of not only our actions but also our symbolically constructed understandings of the

⁴⁰ I am using the term presence in the way expressed by Chaim Perelman and Lucy Olbrechts-Tyteca, The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971)..

world. One of the ways in which social orders are altered is via epideictic rhetoric that expresses a value judgment about the culture and/or the people in it. This is not to say that change is necessarily a good thing. In some instances, the change that is made can be even more destructive than the status quo ante. In other instances, the alteration can be reinforcement or strengthening of already existing value judgments. Burke argues that all rhetoric is necessarily value laden, and many rhetorical devices are merely a restatement of the dominant values in a culture. He contends that Aristotle's topoi are but the verbalized expressions of the attitudes and values of a given social order (ROM 56). However, even the most strongly supported cultural values can be altered over time. I will now turn to a discussion of the ways in which the dominant values of a given order can and do change.

Burke believes that all systems contain within them the potential seeds of their own destruction because of cultural byproducts (unintended consequences) (ATH 139), and of cultural lag, which occurs when the orientations that were good in the past fail to keep up with newly emergent exigencies (P&C 47). The import of this is significant; value judgments never operate in a vacuum, and sometimes the reality on the ground undermines the ideals of the value system. An obdurate reality exists that pushes back against our valuations and has the potential to change not only the value system but also us as individuals (255). The overarching attitude of the individual and/or of the social order is open to change, and when a shift occurs from one attitude to another a revaluation of values has occurred (ATH 37). However, the transition from one value frame to another is not necessarily easy or painless. When a

reevaluation is underway, those loyal to the dying belief structure will respond in order to preserve it. In some instances the response is symbolic, but a brief perusal of history illustrates that violence is frequently the chosen method of preserving the system (134). However, if violence is to be avoided it is important to understand the symbolic responses to a decaying order.

Burke argues that two symbolic responses tend to emerge during these times of disarray: casuistic stretching and “prayer” (ATH 134). In the former, people attempt to expand their current frame of reference in order to account for the exigencies that undermine their orientation. In some instances this stretching can be positive; during the fight for civil rights, the orientation of many Americans did not allow for African Americans to be thought of as equal, and for the civil rights movement to be successful, the attitudes of many needed to be stretched to include African Americans as full humans and citizens. In this way the rights of the constitution, which in its original manifestation defined Blacks as 3/5 of a person, was stretched to encompass people of all racial backgrounds. I do not mean to imply that all American’s frames were stretched in this positive way; racism is still alive and well. What is important though is that when the frame was stretched, it was done in such a way as to not destroy the original value system present in the constitution. It merely redefined who was able to have access to the rights posited in it. However, in other circumstances the stretching that occurs has the potential to destroy outright the orientation or turn it into a twisted caricature of its former self. History is rife with cultures that have disappeared. While some elements of the social orientations may

remain in subsequent cultures, the orientation as a unit was eliminated. In other circumstances, the stretching allows the orientation to remain extant, but with significant modifications to it, which in some instances leads to a complete reversal of the orientation itself.

In the latter, secular prayer, an effort is made to reiterate the value of the frame through symbolically formalistic actions. In religions, ritualistic acts help to establish the import of the religious doctrine and help people remain loyal to it. Burke metaphorically extends this concept to refer to cultural practices that take on a ritualistic role in the maintenance of a cultural value. For example, reciting the pledge of allegiance is a ritualistic act intended to instill civic pride in the populace. In secular prayer, people attempt to symbolically create the world as they want it to be, and in some instances they are bureaucratized and formalized as in legislation (ATH 321). This process is one way in which elements of previous frames find themselves woven into a new orientation. In some instances, the fragments of past orientations remain dormant until new exigencies arise that call for their reemergence; in other instances, the shards are appropriated by the new orientation to serve its purpose (CS 71). When a new orientation gains dominance, it does not magically appear out of thin air; instead, it emerges like the fabled phoenix bird from the ashes of the old frame. When society moves into a new “act,” the drama of the past is always rewritten (ATH 111), but any new cultural construction is built upon the existing cultural material (112). Burke’s analysis of St. Augustine’s transition from a pagan rhetorician to a Christian teacher exemplifies this process. Augustine

did not disavow the rhetorical practices he advocated as a pagan; he merely turned them toward the new end of serving God (ROR 43-171). While the rhetorical principles did not change, the value judgment regarding how they ought to be used was altered.

As societies evolve over time, the underlying values necessarily change in spite of the fact that people search for an “immovable rock” on which to build a structure of certainties (Burke P&C 173). The symbolic act of casuistic stretching allows for members of a community to believe that their values have remained unchanged in spite of significant alterations to the overall orientation of the community. The old vocabulary of values becomes a “eulogistic covering” for the new norms that are being established (ATH 142), and the symbols of authority from the previous regime are appropriated in an effort to strengthen the new orientation (141). This act can occur in a number of ways. The symbol of authority can be borrowed in its current form so that which was previously good remains good, or the symbol can be castigated so that which was previously seen as positive is now viewed in a negative light. The means used to spread Christianity illustrates this point. The newly emergent religion needed to counteract the pagan beliefs that existed if the Christian doctrine was to be spread. In some instances, Christians co-opted pagan rituals by redefining their meaning. For example, pagan marriage rituals which were family sanctioned were slowly transformed over a period of three centuries to move

the locus of control of the rite to the church, giving significant power over the social order to the church.⁴¹

While the above valuation has had significant ramifications for millennia, not all shifts of valuation are as meaningful. In some circumstances the change that occurs is trivial because the overall scene has not changed (Burke ROM 105). At the end of radical reconstruction and after the United States constitution had been amended “guaranteeing” legal equality to African Americans, the overall structure of the slave owning states did not change significantly. While in the past African Americans had been legally enslaved, Jim Crow laws functioned to reestablish the same sort of social hierarchy that existed in the antebellum South (Marable 41). Even though the nation as a whole had adjudged African Americans as deserving of equality under the law, the existential reality in the South for many was not that different from the days of slavery. Many were still exploited for their labor; lynching and other forms of punishment were used to demand certain codes of conduct, and Blacks were systematically denied access to the political process in order to advocate for change. This is not to say that many African Americans did not act to change this, but it illustrates the way in which revaluations can occur at the symbolic level without significantly altering the extant social practices.

Overall, the collective poems of socio-economic organization refer to the major organizational principles of a social order. They provide the meta-level order in which people operate. However, in every localized social order the values will be

⁴¹ For a detailed explanation of this process see Donald Gelp, Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology of Converting Christians (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993).

instantiated in different ways based upon the exigencies faced and the ways in which individuals and the orders respond to them. In the next chapter, I turn my focus to frames of acceptance and rejection, which are attitudes held by individuals and through their aggregate the order itself. The frames refer to the way in which individuals value the order and the way in which the order values individuals. The frame operate at a lower level of abstraction than do the collective poems, and as such, can be altered more readily.

Chapter 5: Frames of Acceptance and Rejection

The collective poems of socioeconomic orientation are Burke's attempt to understand the dominant motivations that organized society in different eras; they focus on "the productive and mental patterns developed by aggregates" (ATH 111). However, valuation cannot be understood by looking solely at these holistic patterns; one must also examine the individual strategies people use in understanding and interacting with the social order. One of the means that Burke used to gain insight into this is the heuristic use of literary genres to outline the ways in which different outlooks on the world shape our understanding of events and how we react to them.⁴² Commonly known as frames of acceptance and rejection, they represent "the more or less organized system of meanings by which a thinking man gauges the historical situation and adopts a role in relation to it" (5). "The poetic or dramatic metaphor...stresses man's nature as a moral-ethical animal and takes into account the drama of choice which the self necessarily experiences in its quest" (Rueckert Drama 52). The frames represent this drama as we use them to assign meaning and to subsequently determine the attitude we have toward the physical, intellectual and social world in which we live (Burke ATH 34), and it is from this meaning that valuation flows because we judge others based upon the attitudes we hold (92).

⁴² This area of Burke's writings overlaps with the concept of generic criticism. He used literary genres metaphorically to encapsulate differing attitudes toward the world. I follow his lead and utilize the same approach. I see the literary categories as heuristic devices that can be used to analyze social and individual valuation. I view these categories as heuristic and not ontological. See Robert C. Rowland (1991). "On generic categorization," *Communication Theory*, 1, 128-144.

Burke's use of genre is not meant to create a calcified system of categorization; instead, it is meant to provide a lens through which we can gain insight into people's motivations and subsequent behaviors. Inherent in motivations are valuations. Hence, I believe these heuristic devices can also illuminate value discourse and formation. Burke divides the frames into three broad categories—acceptance, rejection and transitional—based upon the way they coach individuals to respond to the exigencies of their day. The frames are necessarily social in nature; they are built by “overt or covert acts of transcendence” that connect the individual to society (ATH 106). As such, they represent the ways in which individuals value society and the way the social aggregate judges the individual. In frames of acceptance, people accede to the legitimacy of the social order and its symbols of authority. In contrast, frames of rejection are anti-social in that they stress “a shift in the allegiance to symbols of authority”⁴³ (21) and the value structures they represent. Transition frames represent those times when social orders are in flux and symbols of authority are openly contested and a revaluation of values is occurring.

While the collective poems point to the dominant organizing principles within a given era (Burke ATH 111), frames of acceptance and rejection illustrate the value assessments made by individuals within the social order toward the dominant world view expressed by the order itself. In both the individual and the social, the frames are not mutually exclusive, and elements of all of the different types can frequently be seen in all individuals and social orders. What matters is which frame has emphasis

⁴³ It is important to note that anti-social does not necessarily imply bad. If the social order is destructive, being anti-social could be viewed in a positive light. When I use the phrase anti-social I only mean that it is contrary to the values of the current order.

(57) because it represents the core values of the order, and when a shift from one frame to another occurs it represents “a basic ‘transvaluation of values’” (37). In the field of Communication Studies, the greatest focus of study has been on the acceptance frames of comedy and tragedy.⁴⁴ However, the examination of the other frames has been sparse. A couple of articles have examined the burlesque,⁴⁵ and one scholar has called for the addition of additional literary categories to better flesh out the applicability of the frame.⁴⁶ Rueckert is the only scholar to attempt to examine the frames as a holistic amalgamation of attitudes that could be held, but he only devotes five pages to give a cursory examination of the attitudes that they represent (“Kenneth Burke and Structuralism” 52-56). I believe this has precipitated a couple of difficulties in understanding the full meaning of Burke’s theory. First, by only examining comedy and tragedy as a pair tragedy has been treated as a frame of rejection instead of a frame of acceptance, which is how Burke saw it. Griffin in his groundbreaking application of Burkean thought to social movements argues that

⁴⁴ See for example Edward C. Appel, “The Rhetoric of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: Comedy and Context in Tragic Collision,” Western Journal of Communication 61.4 (1997). Denise M. Bostdorff, “Making Light of James Watt: A Burkean Approach to the Form and Attitude of Political Cartoons,” Quarterly Journal of Speech 73 (1987), A. Cheree Carlson, “Gandhi and the Comic Frame: “Ad Bellum Purificandum,”” Quarterly Journal of Speech 72 (1986), A. Cheree Carlson, “Limitations on the Comic Frame: Some Witty American Women of the Nineteenth Century,” Quarterly Journal of Speech 74 (1988). Adrienne E. Christiansen and Jeremy J. Hanson, “Comedy as Cure for Tragedy: Act up and the Rhetoric of Aids,” Quarterly Journal of Speech 82 (1996). Gregory Desilet, “Nietzsche Contra Burke: The Melodrama in Dramatism,” Quarterly Journal of Speech 75.1 (1989). Leland Griffin, “A Dramatistic Theory of the Rhetoric of Social Movements,” Critical Responses to Kenneth Burke, 1924-1966 (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1969). John M. Murphy, “Comic Strategies and the American Covenant,” Communication Studies 40 (1989). Kimberly A. Powell, “The Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching: Strategies of a Movement in the Comic Frame,” Communication Quarterly 43.1 (1995).

⁴⁵ See Bostdorff, “Political Cartoons.” Edward C. Appel, “Burlesque Drama as Rhetorical Genre: The Hudibrastic Ridicule of William F. Buckley, Jr.,” Western Journal of Communication 60 (1996).

⁴⁶ See Camille Lewis, Romancing the Difference: Kenneth Burke, Bob Jones University, and the Rhetoric of Religious Fundamentalism (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007). Camille K. Lewis, “Publish and Perish? My Fundamental Education from the inside Out,” KB Journal 4.2 (2008).

“movements are tragic” (472), and engage in a “symbolic rejection of the existing order” (465). Murphy continues this line of thought and argues “rhetoric from this perspective becomes a means for eliminating the social order and substituting a new one” (“Comic” 270). Appel presents an argument to justify the placing of tragedy as a frame of rejection. Drawing a distinction between the rhetorical and the poetic he argues “rhetorical tragedy treats the opponent as a ‘kill.’ Such discourse is thoroughly exclusionary” (“Burlesque” 279). Given that Burke placed the tragic clearly as a frame of acceptance (ATH57), these representations are problematic. In this section I will do two things to help fill in the wholes in our understanding of Burkean frames and to offer a framework to help clarify the frames, which I believe will resolve the problems presented by Appel et al. First, I will outline the distinction between frames of acceptance and rejection and how values are central to them; second, I argue that one should view the frames in three distinct ways—attitudinal, heuristic/critical, and rhetorical—which will clarify the ways in which individuals can be operate in differing frames at the same time. Discussion of the transition frames will occur in chapter six.

Frames of Acceptance & Rejection

All frames shape our relationship with other people. They prepare us to not only to be for or against people, ideas, and actions, but they also tell us *how* to be for or against (Burke ATH 4). “Frames are the symbolic structures by which human beings impose order upon their personal and social experiences” (Carlson “Ghandi” 447). The words we use to describe this ordering are weighted with implicit value

judgments that suggest the appropriate actions to be taken. Burke gives priority to frames of acceptance because of his belief that they best balance the needs of the individual and her relationship with the social order while avoiding irreducible simplifications that fail to account for the complexity of the material and social world. Burke's mantra of "It's more complicated than that," which is sprinkled liberally throughout his dialogue "Prologue in Heaven," best sums up the import he found in accepting the complexity of human existence (ROR 273-316). While humans may desire simplicity and attempt to achieve it via myriad rhetorical maneuvers, simplicity necessarily elides the motivations, valuations, and behaviors that underlie human existence. Hence, partiality and incompleteness is characteristic of rejection frames, while the move to completeness and complexity undergird frames of acceptance (ATH 22). This is not to say that a complete understanding of the world will be attained; that is something that is beyond human capacity at this time. What it does indicate is that grappling with the complexity of human existence is a necessary prerequisite to the existence of a humane social order.

The differing frames contain within them world views that are imbued with values, which provide a systematic means of evaluating one's world and his relationship to it. While retaining fluidity, these systems of judgment do place constraints and conditions on those who operate within them, and they define how we understand those who do not ascribe to the same set of values as we do. Burke sees acceptance frames as being more humane because of the way in which they encourage us to value other human beings in a sympathetic light. All value systems

attempt to judge that which is “right” from that which is “wrong,” and their linguistic expressions necessarily contain hortatory admonishments. When these admonishments clash with each other, the entelechial push of moral indignation can cause fractures in the social order. Consider the history of the three Abrahamic religions. All three religions claim the same historical roots and worship the same god; however, history is rife with violent conflicts that have killed innumerable people in an effort to establish a single, primary faith to which all others must ascribe. In eras in which these conflicts occur, the dominant frame is one of rejection in which heretics and infidels are deemed as less than human, and the transcendent beliefs that would allow for a more peaceful coexistence are not present. Frames of rejection are necessarily anti-social in that they exclude some people not only from the immediate social grouping but in some instances also from the human race. Burke traces this phenomenon as it occurred in Nazi Germany in his essay “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle” to illustrate the consequences that can occur when dehumanization is systematically practiced by a social order, and he attempts to sound a clarion call to ensure such a travesty would not be repeated (Burke PLF 164-189).

Burke’s frames of acceptance and rejection can be understood in three different ways by which they implicate epistemology—attitudinal, heuristic/critical, and rhetorical. The first points to the attitudes held by members of a social order and by their aggregate and bureaucratization, the order itself. As such, the frame one ascribes to provides an epistemological foundation by which one gains knowledge about and understanding of the world; the frame provides the worldview through

which all aspects of life will be understood, and ultimately, how one should evaluate it. From this perspective, each individual will operate in relation to the different types of attitudes represented by the varying frames, which necessarily affects the valuations they make. If one is making value judgments within an acceptance frame, the valuations that stem from this operational attitude will be different than if one were within a frame of rejection. However, it is important to note that all individuals have the capacity to operate within any of the frames depending upon the particular exigencies that she is facing. Consider the question of political parties. It is not uncommon for a member of one party to reject out-of-hand any policy that is proffered by operatives of the competing party. In this instance, the individual is operating from within a frame of rejection. Nevertheless, the same individual may very well operate within a frame of acceptance in most of her life, and it seems probable that each individual will have a dominant frame from which they approach the world. However, because people can sometimes have distinct identities that are operational in different contexts (a manager who is horribly mean to her staff, might be a kind-hearted mother), it is also probable that differing frames will be operational in different contexts. Human beings and the environment in which we live are necessarily dynamic, and consequently, value systems will always be in flux as we encounter situations for which our values have not prepared us and as we are forced to reevaluate past circumstances in view of new information or ideas. While most prefer to believe that their values are stable and enduring, the reality is they never are because we can never anticipate all of the circumstances in which we are forced to

offer an evaluation. As such, values are necessarily situational and contextual because we are applying imperfect frames to a continually emergent world that cannot be neatly categorized and evaluated.

The second way in which frames of acceptance and rejection should be understood is as heuristic/critical. The frames are heuristic devices that provide critics insight into how societal values are created, disseminated, and altered via interactions among disparate individuals. As Burke argues, humans are driven by a sense of order, and we attempt the improbable—a schema through which all human behavior can be understood (LAS 3-24). One of the ways in which this occurs is by categorizing eras based on those things the categorizer deems to be significant. The emphasis chosen pushes the receiver of this information to come to a particular conclusion about the era. It is often said that history belongs to the victors because the dominant valuation of events will be filtered through the value system of the winning party, and in many instances, the symbolic value of the historical event becomes more significant than the facticity of the event itself. Myths are symbolically constructed that create a narrative, which instantiate a particular perspective of shared values. These symbolic maneuvers provide the appearance of continuity in the value system as the narrative provides a seamless presentation of historical events. This act elides the ways in which our understanding and enactment of values are both consciously and unconsciously altered over time. From a symbolic perspective, any rendering of history is necessarily revisionist because some things will be valued as worthy of inclusion while others things will not be, and any

understanding will necessarily be incomplete. However, this does not deny that efforts to categorize human history serve a heuristic function by allowing one to see the consequences of particular value judgments. It is in this process that Burke's frames of acceptance and rejection add to our understanding of values. Each frame provides a value laden lens through which we can gain knowledge of human symbolic action.

The third way in which frames of acceptance and rejection should be understood is as a type of rhetorical invention. The frames we utilize function as a means of invention that shapes the rhetorical strategies utilized by rhetors. When a rhetor adapts a particular frame as a means of invention, she will construct arguments that differ from ones that would have been found if using a differing frame. When the audience is operating within a frame of acceptance, then a skilled rhetor will look for transcendent rhetorical choices that attempt to bridge gaps among people. However, if the audience is operating within a frame of rejection, the rhetorical choices will be factional and descendent in nature as the rhetor attempts to create and exploit divisions. Even from this perspective, the frames clearly overlap as invention is an aspect of epistemology. However, for the purpose of clarifying the differing uses of the frames, it is useful to consider them as separate categories. While one's epistemological groundings will always shape how one constructs and understands arguments and emotional appeals, a rhetor can choose to create rhetoric that utilizes strategies that are contrary to his own view of the world in order to more effectively persuade others to believe a particular idea or take a certain action. Hence, the rhetor

my find it expedient to temporarily operate within a different frame than he normally would in order to best reach his audience.

This way of analyzing the frames helps to resolve what Appel saw as the problem in Burke's conception of frames. He contends that William F. Buckley, Jr.'s public rhetoric in relation to liberals was burlesque, which is a frame of rejection, but in his personal life he had many close friends who were liberals ("Burlesque" 277). This leads him to argue the Burlesque should be seen as a mediator between comedy as acceptance and tragedy as rejection. This move, however, creates less clarity in Burke's purpose. While there is a clear difference in the way in which comedy and tragedy accept, Burke's main point is that both of these frames ultimately accept the social order; they just have different ways of comprehending and subsequently dealing with the problems that inevitably arrive. My conception allows one to see that Buckley operated within the tragic frame of acceptance—he scapegoated liberals while at the same time recognizing their fundamental humanness; however, he used rhetorical devices that publicly rejected the values presented by liberals. This framework allows for a more nuanced understanding of the difference between one's value system and the way in which one's rhetorical choices can and do deviate from it. In the following section, I will explain each of the frames using the framework that I have established. My goal is to create a broader understanding of all of the frames and to illustrate why all of the frames should be the focus of rhetorical scholarship.

Frames of Acceptance

Burke lays out three literary genres that represent attitudes wherein “the element of acceptance is uppermost:” the epic, the comic and the tragic (ATH 43). While he values all acceptance frames as superior to those of rejection, he does not see them as being equal to each other. In all three, a balance between the individual and the social order exists that allows for the functioning and maintenance of society. However, he believes that the most humane of the three is the comic (42) because the comic calls for a worldview that deals sympathetically with the foibles of others and provides the basis of identification with others in the social group.

The progress of human enlightenment can go no further than in picturing people not as *vicious*, but as *mistaken*. When you add that people are *necessarily* mistaken, that *all* people are exposed to situations in which they must act as fools, that *every* insight contains its own special kind of blindness, you complete the comic circle, returning again to the lesson of humility that underlies great tragedy. (41)

Hence, the comic frame deals with the complexities of life and avoids oversimplification that turns humans into caricatures that preclude identification.

The comic as an attitudinal frame values humans qua humans and avoids the construction of enemies out of those who differ from oneself. Instead of enemies, one has worthy opponents. It is tolerant of other perspectives and recognizes the variation of values that exist within a culture. While “comedy seeks belief” it does not do so “at the price of banishing doubt and question” (Duncan 406). One can disagree with others, but this disagreement recognizes the rights of others to disagree with him as

well. In short, it stresses “man in society” (Burke ATH 170), and aids in providing “important cures for the composition of one’s life, which demands accommodation to the structure of other’s lives” (174). “Social orders develop problems no matter how good the intentions that idealize them” but from a comic perspective “these problems do not make social orders so evil in themselves that they must be completely tossed aside” (Carlson “Ghandi” 446). Instead, the individual works within the system to alter it while recognizing that others have a right to do the same.

As an epistemological/heuristic device, comedy entreats the critic to take a panoramic view of that which is being analyzed. The goal of comedy from this perspective is to avoid creating pigeon holes that elide a complete understanding of people and events. Most importantly it must be noted that Burke believes that *all* people should be critics in their daily lives. “The comic frame, as a *method of study* is a better personal possession...than the somewhat empty accumulation of facts” (ATH 170)⁴⁷ because it is what helps foster a “mature social efficacy” (171) that makes for a more humane social order. Ultimately, “the comic frame should enable people *to be observers of themselves, while acting*. Its ultimate would not be *passiveness, but maximum consciousness*. One would ‘transcend’ himself by noting his own foibles” (171),⁴⁸ which allows him to be more forgiving of others. Finally, its openness allows for the recognition that values do and must change as social exigencies mandate. Instead of creating a calcified system of values, it aids in the modification of values when the current system is no longer productive for the order.

⁴⁷ Italics in original.

⁴⁸ Italics in original.

Hence, “it might mitigate somewhat the difficulties in engineering a shift to new symbols of authority, as required by the new social relationships that the revolutions of historic environment have made necessary” (173).

As a rhetorical device, one who employs the comic perspective will attempt to utilize strategies that help create positive identifications that allow for transcendence. The goal of the rhetor is to build bridges between factions that highlight similarities while also respecting individual differences. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech is a good example of the rhetoric being framed within a comic attitude. His rhetoric attempts to bridge differences and to create an understanding of the United States that allows all citizens an equal place within it.

The tragic, while still sympathetic to others, is a frame that is narrower than that of the comic. “Tragedy deals in crime—and any incipient trend will first be felt as crime, by reason of its conflict with established values. But tragedy deals sympathetically with crime...we are made to feel that his offence is our offence” (Burke ATH 39 note). From the attitudinal perspective, those who operate within a tragic frame are necessarily suspect when new ideas and things emerge within the social order, and they may view those who generate or participate in the new ideals as being bad for society. This can be seen in generational shifts wherein members of the older generation view the younger members of society as bringing calamity to the order, and they frequently work to prevent the new ideas from taking hold. As a general rule, the view is not that the youth are bad; instead the new elements they bring to society are bad. Those who operate within the tragic frame tend to be

resistant to change and only come to it grudgingly. The acceptance that arises from the tragic may be slow to come to fruition, but the acceptance ultimately comes as “the tragic catharsis temporarily or even partly solves (or resolves) an intolerable conflict and thus enables one to ‘resign’ himself to himself and life by enabling him once again to ‘accept’ both” (Rueckert Drama 54).⁴⁹

From a heuristic perspective, the tragic lens suggests that the critic should place an emphasis upon those cultural factors that are viewed with suspicion. The newly emergent aspects of the social order are the areas in which social discord is likely to emerge when members of society are resistant to change in or new understandings of the order. As such, the points of contention allow the critic to highlight those areas in which value change is occurring or has the possibility to occur. In any situation the fit between the individual(s) and the norms of society is going to be imperfect, and “tragic ambiguity” wherein “a growing trend is at once recommended and punished” will arise (Burke ATH 29). The mixed messages present in tragic ambiguity are fodder for a social critic who is attempting to understand rifts in the social order and how they might alter its underlying values and purpose. From this perspective, “the critical analysis of ‘tragic’ motives is in essence

⁴⁹ It should be noted that one of the reasons some scholars have looked upon the tragic frame as one of rejection is because of the potential for harm that arises from tragedy. While a tragic view accepts the social order, one may engage in behaviors to protect it that ultimately end in harm to it. The Vietnam War is an example of this process. Many who supported and implemented the war believed that it was necessary to maintain the United States as a democratic nation; however, the war ultimately contributed to deep fissures in the American society and the death of tens of thousands of people. It is because of this potential outcome of a tragic frame that some misapply it as a frame of rejection. The key point is the attitude held by individuals. The goal is not to destroy the order; the goal is to preserve it, but one’s terministic screens and their entelechial push can inadvertently lead to its destruction.

‘comic’” (348-9) because it provides the critic with greater clarity of what the motives are.

Rhetors will frequently find that tragic ambiguity is serviceable as a source of invention. As the fissures emerge within the value system, rhetors can capitalize upon them in an effort to evoke changes in the order. In this way, “‘tragic ambiguity’ may also be ‘prophetic’” (Burke ATH 190). It provides an opening into the value system wherein a rhetor can symbolically construct a new image of what the values ought to be. In this way it “may also serve as the strategic way of recommending a trend which will later attain its ‘bureaucratic embodiment’” (190). Hence, an alteration in the order can be rhetorically coached using the weaknesses present within the order itself.

The final acceptance frame is that of the epic. Burke does not spend significant time discussing this genre because the worldview is one that arises “under primitive conditions” (ATH 35). Specifically, it is based in a warrior culture that “‘accepts’ the rigors of war by magnifying the role of the warlike hero” (35). It is a worldview that helped members of a warrior society accept the realities of their existence by promoting “the attitude of resignation” (37). “The social value of such a pattern resides in its ability to make humility and self-glorification work together” (36). The attitude found within this frame is one that allows the individual to come to terms with his “personal limits” (ATH 37) by realizing that “even god-like men have their personal and human limitations” (Rueckert Drama 53).

While Burke does not see this attitude present in significant amounts in contemporary culture, it can still serve as a heuristic device to understand elements of one's culture. Burke contends that the epic fails to serve its proper role when it becomes purely secular because it allows the "non-hero to make his identification with the hero complete," which precludes humility and "approaches the risks of coxcombry" (ATH 36 note). Hence, it provides a means to understand rhetorical choices wherein the rhetor strongly identifies with "glories" of war fighting in spite of the fact that he never engaged in combat himself. Since the United States invaded in 2003, many pundits and politicians have exhibited this sort of mentality as they attempted to justify the war and the ongoing occupation of sovereign nation.⁵⁰ In their discourse surrounding the Iraqi conflict, many men who evaded the draft during the Vietnam War through educational deferments and enrollment in the National Guard rhetorically identified themselves with the troops who were actually in combat. Even though they never faced the risks of war fighting themselves, they rhetorically identified themselves with the troops in such a way as to bolster their own reputations. This suggests a value system that prioritizes image over reality and the willingness to use others as a means to a personal ends regardless of the consequences for the other. It turns an acceptance frame into one of rejection as it allows people to only accept others based on the sacrifices that they are willing to make for them.

⁵⁰ Consider President George W. Bush's landing of an airplane on the deck of a naval warship to celebrate the "Mission Accomplished" in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. While he never participated in battle, he was rhetorically identifying himself with the military personnel who had actually engaged in combat, taking their glory for his own.

The above example also illustrates the way in which the epic can be used as a rhetorical strategy. Through the process of identification one attempts to link himself with the glory and sacrifices of others. Politicians frequently find it expedient to rely on this sort of rhetorical strategy. Consider the use of images of firefighters following 9-11 by Rudolph Giuliani in his effort to gain the Republican nomination for president in 2008. Michael Dukakis attempted to increase his image as commander in chief material by posing in an army tank. It is important to note that as a rhetorical strategy, this sort of suasion by identification is only workable if the audience members accept the connection.

Frames of Rejection

Contrary to frames of acceptance, rejection frames are attitudinal systems wherein disassociation from the symbols of authority of the system occurs. When this happens, many who attempt to “reject a given symbol of authority, eventually get shunted into all sorts of ‘anti-social’ attitudes” (Burke ATH 99-100). Consequently, they reject all or part of the values of the social order; in some instances, they withdraw from the order, and in others they attempt to convince people that the order is bad and should be changed in a particular way. This is not to imply that rejection frames never have a use—they do (107); in some circumstances, one of the rejection frames may best pinpoint the flaw within the system. The problem, however, arises because rejection frames are necessarily partial in their orientation and “the methods of caricature do not equip us to understand the full complexities of sociality—hence

they warp our programs of action” (93). Burke outlines three such frames that fall prey to this problem: the plaint (elegy), satire, and burlesque.

To begin, the plaint is a frame in which people become obsessed with the negative elements of life. “Once a man has perfected the technique of complaint, he is more at home with sorrow than he would be without it” (Burke ATH 44). In other words, those operating within this attitudinal structure are incapable of accepting good things, which leads to choices that enable bad things to happen, and the cycle of negativity continues unabated. The 1970s variety show *Hee Haw* had a recurring skit that neatly illustrates the worldview of the plaint. A group of dejected men would sing the following song. “Gloom, despair and agony on me; deep dark depression excessive misery; if it weren’t for bad luck, I’d have no luck at all; gloom, despair and agony on me.” It is a worldview in which everything is always valuated in a negative light. When bad things happen, it justifies the existence of the frame, and when good things happen, the only purpose is to make the inevitable fall that much more painful.

One who ascribes to the worldview of the plaint will likely seek out the negative aspects of everything. Critics can utilize this frame to analyze social actions to determine the ways in which social problems are a result of overreacting to exigencies and failing to note the positive elements of circumstances. The assumption within the plaint being that bad must exist in everything and everyone. As such, one is likely to gain knowledge in which the deleterious elements are given preeminence over the positive in every circumstance. For example, a parent who

operates within this frame is likely to see the potential bad things that could happen to children in everything and work to forestall them from occurring. A child might break a bone while riding her bike, so bike riding would not be allowed. A child might be abducted if allowed to walk to school by herself; therefore, the child is delivered to school. The consequences of the elegy as a means of understanding the world is likely to result in overreactions to situations that might well lead to worse consequences, which then further justifies the assumptions of the frame in the mind of the person operating from within it. As such, the plaint creates a self-fulfilling cycle of negativity.

As a means of invention it is important to understand the implications that the elegy has for rhetorical appeals.

The elegiac, the “wailing wall,” may serve well for individual trickeries in one’s relation to the obligations of struggle—but if it becomes organized as a collective movement, you may feel sure that a class of people will arise to “move in on” it, exploiting it to a point where more and more good reasons for complaint are provided, until the physical limits of the attitude are reached.

(Burke ATH 44)

What this suggests is that as a rhetorical strategy it is disempowering to the listener and provides a means for the unscrupulous to use the attitude as cover for their behaviors. Consider the common refrain that all politicians are crooks and/or on the take. If all politicians are dirty, there is not a substantial reason to prefer one over the other on their own merits, and it provides cover for politicians when they get busted

for being corrupt because that is just the way politics are. One cannot expect them not to play the game. The rhetorical strategy of painting all politicians in the same light allows those who wish to break the rules to do so with virtual impunity when the listeners accept the rationale of the plaint. When a rhetorician utilizes the plaint as part of strategic discourse, it is important to consider that which she is attempting to normalize and justify by the excessive focus on the negative.

Like the plaint, satire is a frame that miscalibrates the gauge by which people evaluate the world. However, understanding satire as a rejection frame is complicated because as Burke himself notes “satire is as confusing as the plaint” (Burke ATH 49). This confusion is furthered by Burke’s subtle shifting of his position on the role that satire plays in discourse and his reliance on satire in his later life to challenge technology, which he deemed to be the major problem of the day. I believe that the schema of attitudinal, heuristic, and rhetorical that I have established to interrogate the frames helps to clarify the differing ways that satire can and does function. As previously noted, Burke recognizes that any of the frames can be fruitful in limited circumstances, and this is one area where he clearly illustrates the exception when satire can function in a positive way.

As an attitudinal frame of valuation, satire allows individuals to scapegoat others for their own flaws. Burke characterizes it as attacking “*in others* the weaknesses and temptations that are really *within himself*” (ATH 49). While Burke notes that some instances of scapegoating can have a positive, cathartic effect on the social order, he draws a distinction between the creation of a universal scapegoat and

a factional scapegoat. The universal scapegoat, such as Christ's sacrifice, both condemns all people and allows for all people's absolution. Because it "accuses all men ...and absolves them in the lump...There is no unfinished business...The experience is complete and final. Hence it calls for 'contemplation'" (189 note). The factional scapegoat, on the other hand, "is closer to the strategy of satire" (188 note). The projection of one's foibles onto others allows individuals to dissociate their bad behaviors from themselves, which necessarily alters the valuation of self and of the other. As such, the satirical worldview creates a value system in which people are able to absolve themselves of guilt by transferring it upon others.

The satirical is likely to shape the understanding of events in ways that make the building of community difficult. Because the holder of this view needs to find external scapegoats to absolve himself of his sins, he is likely to understand the external world as one filled with deviancy and sin. The drive to find the perfect scapegoat is likely to infiltrate all of his actions. "Since one's offence has been transferred to the shoulders of the other faction, the 'cleansing' leaves one with a 'program of action' *beyond* the ritual. That is in some way he must act to weaken the other faction, the vessel charged with his own temptation" (Burke ATH 189 note). This suggests that the satirical worldview is one in which enemy construction is a central element that will influence all choices and judgments made about the external world. The problem with this is that it prevents one from meeting the world's challenges directly with an honest assessment of the role that one plays in said problems. Hence, the search for the eternal scapegoat precludes one from actually

dealing with the deleterious parts of one's behaviors and provides cover for the violation of one's own value system. The critic can utilize this frame to analyze and better understand circumstances in which the laying of blame in the social order is a rhetorical covering for one's own weaknesses.

Satire as a rhetorical strategy, however, is somewhat different. While dangers exist within this frame, it is in this area that Burke altered his assessment of the utility of satire. I will first discuss the problems associated with satire as a rhetorical ploy and then outline the circumstances under which he believes that it is necessary. At its base level, satire is a strategy that is beset with problems of understandability when people take the piece at its face value and do not recognize the satirical purpose of it (Burke OHN 54). This has two potential ramifications. The first is that some might believe that the rhetor is advocating the "outrageous" ideas present within the piece, and as a result, adjudge the rhetor as morally insufficient. Not only does this judgment render the satire as ineffective as a rhetorical device, it also weakens the ability of the rhetor to reach her audience using different tactics because of her seeming moral deficiency. On the other hand, some may read the satire in a similar manner but reach a different judgment of it and see it as support of the idea that is being implicitly criticized by the rhetor but which a particular faction actually believes. As such, the satirical piece can function as a rallying point for the faction's followers as it is co-opted to support conclusions with which the rhetor would never agree.

Nevertheless, Burke in his later life determined that these are sometimes risks that need to be taken because satire might “enable us to contemplate a situation to which we might otherwise close our minds, by self-deception, or by dissipation” (OHN 80). Because some problems implicate all of us, people can be resistant to recognizing the problem and the ways in which they contribute to it (73). As such, an “outright ‘indictment,’ which often encourages inattention or dissipation with regard to such an unpleasant subject” is unlikely to be effective (86). The purpose of satire from this perspective is to provide a means to break through people’s terministic screens and cause recognition of the problem as well as their complicity in its perpetuation.⁵¹

Like all other forms of communication, for it to be an effective means of social change, people have to be exposed to it. As such, satire will always be limited in its scope by the ability to reach a large enough audience to matter. While this problem is not unique to the question of satire, rhetors who rely on it need to be cognizant of this particular limitation. Because it is not presented as “serious,” they may have greater difficulty reaching people. However, this problem can be alleviated to a certain extent by the way the satire is packaged for consumption. For example, the animated series *South Park* frequently relies upon satire as a means of social

⁵¹ For a contemporary example of someone who uses satire in this way see Derrick Bell is a Critical Race Theorist, and this satirical piece is found in his book *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, Basic Books: New York, 1993. This essay attempts to illustrate the ways in which monied interests in society use racial divides to prevent all people from lower socio-economic strata from joining together in an effort to create a more equitable and just society. He uses satire to soften the edges of his argument that all people are implicated in racial problems in our nation and to expose the ways in which people are manipulated by the issue of race. While I believe Bell’s essay to be a brilliant use of satire, the fact that many readers of this book may have never heard of it, illustrates an additional problem with the use of satire as a rhetorical device.

criticism. The show debuted in 1997, and new episodes are still being created. Part of the reason the show is as successful as it has been is that its commentary is woven together with a variety of humorous devices that are appealing to people independent of the satirical elements. While it offers significant social criticism through a satirical lens, the show is presented in an animated format that makes it less threatening to viewers. It also surrounds its criticisms with simple humor that one would expect to hear from seventh graders, i.e. toilet humor. Hence, it has been packaged in such a way as to entice viewers who may not be interested in their criticisms to watch the show anyway. This example illustrates the way in which satire can be enhanced by being combined with other rhetorical forms.

Like the plaint and satire, burlesque also limits one's understanding of the world by creating a terministic screen that prevents one from having a holistic perspective. The burlesque focuses only on the "externals of behavior, driving them to a 'logical conclusion' that becomes their 'reduction to absurdity'" (Burke ATH 54), and "deliberately suppresses any consideration of the 'mitigating circumstances' that would put his subject in a better light" (55). The burlesque functions by creating caricatures and treating them as if they are complete representations of people and events. As an attitudinal frame, the burlesque precludes an accurate valuation because of its narrow focus on people's foibles and disallowance of any effort to understand the reasons behind people's behaviors. This focus on externality elides the motivations and value assessments of the one being judged; by deflecting the reasons behind other people's behaviors, the burlesque necessarily establishes the

other as morally deficient and the self as morally superior. It allows one all of the rights associated with the values of the social order without having the obligation to let others have the same rights. As such it is “partisan” and incomplete (55).

The burlesque relies upon strawperson arguments—a misallocated synecdoche. It establishes people’s quirks and foibles as the entirety of the person, “suppresses any acceptable reasoning behind actions” (Bostdorff 46), and subsequently determines that this proves the person as a whole is flawed. While the burlesque can be useful at points to highlight the flaws of a person or a system, it can only be edifying if one makes an effort to understand that which is illuminated is casting shadows upon other relevant details.

It does not contain a well-rounded frame within itself; we can use it for the ends of wisdom only insofar as we ourselves provide the ways of making allowances for it; we must not be merely equal to it, we must be enough greater than it to be able to “discount” what it says. (Burke ATH 55)

Consequently, the burlesque should only be used with great caution because it has the potential to misjudge the situation in ways that prevent any sort of true understanding of events. “The methods of caricature do not equip us to understand the full complexities of sociality—hence they warp our programs of action...making cynical self-interest the most logical of policies” (103). Hence, one who understands the world using the burlesque is also likely to utilize it as a rhetorical strategy as a means of creating factions that are exploitable (92). A critic can use this lens to uncover those rhetorical strategies that create factions and preclude transcendence.

As a rhetorical strategy, the burlesque relies upon debunking to sway audiences (Burke ATH 93), which “makes co-operation difficult, since it sees utilitarian motives everywhere. The ‘debunking’ frame of interpretation becomes a colossal enterprise in ‘transcendence downwards that is good for polemical disintegrative purposes” (92-3). The goal of a rhetor relying upon the burlesque is to use division in order to prevent groups that may otherwise have been allies from joining forces to reach common goals. An example of the use of the burlesque in contemporary political discourse is that of political pundit Ann Coulter who relies on caricatures of liberals and Democrats to strengthen the base of the Republican Party. Consider her statements regarding four 9-11 widows who had been highly critical of the Bush administration’s handling of terrorist threats. She accused them of enjoying the deaths of their husbands and labeled them the “Witches of East Brunswick” in order to delegitimize their political power.⁵² In essence, she created a polemic caricature of the women, and then used the caricature to elide the arguments that they were making. It was an ad hominem attack that was constructed to change the focus from the criticisms that they were making by undercutting their personal ethos. Burke notes that the purpose of the caricature is to advance one’s cynical self-interest (93), and Coulter was not an exception to the rule as she was using the attacks to sell her book Godless: The Church of Liberalism.⁵³

⁵² For further details about her attacks see “Ann coulter Attacks 9/11 Widows,” *CBS News* May 11, 2008 5-11-08 <<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/06/07/entertainment/main1690954.shtml>>

⁵³ Many blogs across the political spectrum have a tendency to fall into this same sort of rhetorical pattern as those who have differing political beliefs are frequently dismissed and made fun of for the beliefs that they hold. For example, many liberal blogs use the phrase wing-nut to refer to

While the dominance of acceptance frames helps maintain a cohesive social order, when rejection frames become widespread the symbols of authority of the order are necessarily weakened, and the society can become factionalized as “they arrive at a sect-within-a sect-within-a-sect” (Burke ATH 101). When this occurs, the social order can be viewed as being in a transitional frame, wherein the symbols of authority are in flux and open to change. During this time period competing factions will engage in competition over the authoritative symbols and what they mean. Burke uses two literary categories to interrogate this process: the grotesque and the didactic, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

conservatives, and the term wing-nut welfare is used to denigrate the work of conservatives who work in conservative think tanks and lobbying firms.

Chapter 6: Transition Frames

When frames of rejection gain critical mass, they will necessarily undercut the existing symbols of authority and their underlying values. However, frames are recalcitrant and the values present in the frames of rejection will not neatly replace the extant values and their authoritative symbols because “the ways in which such symbolic patterns behave when released into a socio-economic texture may take surprising twists” (Burke ATH 88 note). An interregnum will exist in which value systems fluctuate and competing factions will fight over what the values ought to be and what symbols of authority will represent said values. These are the eras represented by the transitional frames of the grotesque and the didactic.

The literary genre of the grotesque represents a situation in which the auditor is both repelled by and attracted to a person, idea or object. As a transitional frame, the grotesque⁵⁴ emerges in eras “marked by great confusion of the cultural frame, requiring a radical shift in people’s allegiance to symbols of authority” (Burke ATH 58). They are simultaneously drawn to the symbols of authority and have a desire to reject them. The grotesque is not the cause of the cultural confusion, but it arises as a result of the fluctuating values of the social order. Because the value system is unstable, it is an attitudinal frame that “gives more prominence to the subjective elements of imagery than to the objective, or public elements” (60). In a sense, the social order lacks a clear master-purpose that guides and structures the thoughts and

⁵⁴ For a good explanation of the grotesque as it relates to literary criticism see Edward Watson, “Incongruity with Laughter: Kenneth Burke’s Theory of the Grotesque,” University of Windsor Review (1969). Watson uses Burke’s notion of the grotesque and it provides a good background view of the genre.

behaviors of the individual (P&C 253 note 1). As a result the individual is left to his own devices to shape his responses to the broader social order. These individual choices will tend to manifest themselves in ways that are best understood by examining the relationship between the grotesque and the mystical. Burke correlates the grotesque frame with mysticism (ATH 57; P&C 112), which is also equated with purpose (GOM 128).

In eras where mystical thought gains dominance, the social order is unable to provide people with a satisfactory explanation that provides one with purpose or meaning to life.

...mystical philosophies appear as a general social manifestation in times of great skepticism or confusion about the nature of human purpose. They are a mark of transition, flourishing when one set of public presuppositions about the ends of life has become weakened or disorganized, and no new public structure, of sufficient depth and scope to be satisfying, has yet taken its place.

(Burke GOM 288)

As a result, people look beyond the public structure in order to find meaning and purpose for their lives. One common way in which this act is manifested is by the reliance upon ideology as a guiding principle (ROM 110). Humans are “moved by a sense of order” (LAS 15), and when the superstructure of the order is fragmented and fails to provide a sufficient meaning and organization to one’s life, the pull of ideology is strengthened because it creates a master frame through which the world can be understood and organized. Even when the ideology is largely inconsistent

with the apparent facticity of the world, it gains in power because it creates a system of valuation that provides structure and meaning to one's life. It is a master system that explains how things *should* be, and it creates a "unity of the individual with some *cosmic or universal purpose*" (GOM 288).

Ideology, however, is frequently inconsistent with the actual functioning of events in the world, which requires individuals to lose focus on the external world in order to maintain belief in the suppositions of the ideology. "It confronts the here-and-now with a concept of a beyond" (Burke ATH 73), and it "makes for passivity" within the frame (75). As such, the grotesque is marked by the passive acceptance of ideological precepts, which provides the individual with the *perception* of a firm grounding that the social order itself is unable to provide. The incongruities between the ideological precepts and the actual are further masked by a focus on the trivial (61). "A vast entertainment industry has been erected for those who prefer the last solution, asking that 'distraction' be converted from ill-omened to good-omened connotations" (61-2). Others resolve the issue by a focus on the material (62). Consider President George W. Bush's admonition after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 that people should go shopping. The goal was to take focus off of the failure of the administration to prevent the attacks and to allow them to pursue policies such as invading Iraq without garnering public opposition. This facilitated flimsy justifications for the war by encouraging a focus on the material elements of one's life. This push to the trivial allows people to acquiesce to that which would otherwise be met with consternation. Hence, the individual focus on the trivial allows

for the passive acceptance of the teleological push of the ideology by preventing facticity from interfering with the ideological narrative.

As a heuristic device, the grotesque frame aids the critic in understanding the ways in which value change is occurring in a social order. By looking for markers of ideology, its passive acceptance, and an increased focus on the trivial, one can gauge the relative stability of an order's system of values. It suggests that one should follow Burke's admonishment previously discussed that looking at the seemingly trivial elements of a culture is necessary to gain a full insight into the values of the order. This idea will be discussed in greater detail when examining the concept of symbols of authority, but for now it is sufficient to keep in mind that cultural values are expressed in a variety of venues and that at points, the seemingly trivial elements provide the greatest insight into how revaluation is occurring.

As a rhetorical strategy, a rhetor is likely to capitalize upon two particular elements. First, she will probably engage in the use of rhetorical smoke-and-mirrors in an effort to strengthen the belief in the underpinnings of the ideology and to ensure that a focus on the trivial sufficiently distracts the audience from noticing internal inconsistencies or truly evaluating the consequences of the policies the ideology endorses. It is in the realm of rhetorical strategy that the grotesque and the didactic become somewhat indistinguishable. As will be explained below, the didactic is an active frame that coaches "the imagination in obedience to critical postulates" (Burke ATH 75). As such, the rhetor who capitalizes on an audience's passive acceptance of ideology is operating within both the grotesque and the didactic in that she is

capitalizing upon the audience's grotesque framing by actively coaching the attitudes present in their ideological precepts. Hence, she is manipulating the audience's grotesque framing by using a didactic rhetorical strategy. To better illuminate this overlap, I will now move to a discussion of the didactic proper.

The didactic, according to Burke, is synonymous with propaganda (ATH 75); however, it is important to note that despite common perceptions of propaganda as being a negative force, Burke does not weight it in that manner. Instead he sees it as a principle form of hortatorial discourse. "It must have a definitive hortatory function, an educational element of suasion or inducement; it must be partially forensic. Such a quality we consider to be the essential work of propaganda" (PLF 277). As such, it is an active rhetorical form utilized to coach into existence a particular system of values, which can be used in both a positive and negative fashion. It is without question that propaganda has historically been used to promote terrible value systems. Burke's analysis of Hitler's rhetoric is but one example of this; however, the first definition in Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines propaganda as "information, ideas or rumors deliberately spread widely to help or harm a person, group, movement, institution, nation, etc." (1549). This is the way in which Burke uses the term with a recognition that propaganda can be used ethically or unethically and can serve either good or bad ends. While I understand the deep distrust of the notion of propaganda because of some of the ways it has been historically used, for the purposes of this analysis, I will discuss it in the way Burke intended it to be understood.

As such, the grotesque and the didactic are closely related, and in some instances almost indistinguishable. Burke discusses this conundrum in detail in A Grammar of Motives, and his discussion indicates that the key difference between the two is the attitude held by the user of the rhetorical forms. He connects the grotesque to the mystical, and the didactic to propaganda, which he correlates to the agency element of the pentad, which is aligned with a pragmatic understanding of the world (288-290).

...even one adopts a rudimentary pragmatist view of art, as in advertising or propaganda, he has but moved the Agency-Purpose ambiguity a step farther along: for we then have to decide whether the financial or political structure which such applied art serves is to be classed as Agency or Purpose. Thus with the Hitlerite cult of the State: was it crass pragmatism (in using the philosophy of the State purely as a rhetoric for inducing people to acquiesce in the designs of an elite) or crude mysticism (in genuinely looking upon the power and domination of the State as the ultimate end of social life)? (290)

Hence, if the rhetor believes in the underlying ideology of the propaganda, he is operating within the grotesque; however, if the rhetor is merely using ideological precepts in order to influence the public's valuation of events and people, he is leaning more toward the didactic: It functions as a difference in attitude.

As an attitudinal frame, the didactic is active in that people who work within this frame have a strong sense of values and believe that it is their responsibility to convince others to accept the same value frame. The "incentives behind evangelism

and education or propaganda” are the same (Burke P&C 81). The distinction between this and the mystical-grotesque is merely a matter of focus. In the grotesque, the emphasis is on the ends of the ideal, whereas in the didactic, the focus is on the means of attaining the ends. This distinction is important. An integral part of the didactic is the use of secular prayer in order to achieve one’s desired goals. The attitude is actively coached both within oneself and externally toward the other. “[S]ecular prayer’ involves ‘character building’ in that one shapes his attitudes, the logic of his life, by the co-ordinates he chooses, and one shapes his actions with reference to the judgments that follow from the co-ordinates” (ATH 326). Hence, the didactic attitude is necessarily the active counterpart to the more passive grotesque. One does not just accept one’s condition; instead, one actively works to change the self and if necessary the social world in which he lives.

More than many of the other frames, Burke has a strong focus on the means of propaganda and the necessity of the critic to understand the ways in which propaganda works both as a pathological device but also as a social corrective. In this section, I will discuss the both the heuristic application of the didactic as well as its related rhetorical strategies. Because Burke largely discusses these two realms simultaneously, it is easier to analyze them at the same time. In his analysis of Mein Kampf, he details a number of the propagandist techniques used by Hitler to achieve his final solution. He notes that the “ideal act of propaganda consists in imaginatively identifying your cause with values that are unquestioned” (PLF 73 note 6). In this way, the didactic uses word magic to connect the value one wishes to insert into the

extant value system, and the process of identification makes it difficult to separate them once they have been connected because any attack on the newly inserted value is perceived as an attack on the existing, closely held values. While this strategy is not guaranteed to work, when it is successful, it is difficult to alter after the fact because the values may not be easily delinked.

A second way in which propaganda functions is through “the power of endless repetition” (Burke PLF 186). An example of this in contemporary America relates to the public’s understanding of the relationship between Iraq and al Qaeda in the lead up to and immediate aftermath of the United States’ invasion of the country. A survey conducted by the University of Maryland and the Program on International Policy Attitudes found that in January 2003, prior to the invasion of Iraq, the majority of those polled believed that Saddam Hussein had been directly involved in the attacks of 9/11 (Kull 1). With more refined questioning, the poll conducted in February 2003 found that only one in five believed that he was directly involved in the attacks, but the majority believed that he had a significant relationship with al Qaeda (1). More importantly, after the fall of Baghdad, about half of the respondents believed that evidence had been found in Iraq proving a close relationship between Hussein and al Qaeda (3). While none of these beliefs are factual, the Bush administration and their proxies repeatedly made the connection by either direct statements or more subtle allusions that indirectly tied the two entities together. The result was that large numbers of people believed to be true connections that had been proven to be false. Hence, repetition provides a means to alter how people

understand the extant in ways that are contrary to the best available evidence. As Burke notes, Hitler effectively utilized this strategy to reach the ends of the Third Reich. However, the danger posed by this is magnified in the contemporary era where technology and the 24 hour news cycle has vastly increased the ability for ideas to be extensively repeated, magnifying their propagandistic power. This supposition is supported by the same study, which found that people who received their news information from television were the most likely to have these erroneous perceptions of the relationship between Iraq and el Qaeda (Kull 18). This increased rapidity in the transmission of information has further implications for non-traditional areas of value discourse such as popular culture, which will be examined in greater detail when I discuss symbols of authority. Hence, the ability of the propagandist is much greater in the present era than it was in the past, which increases the likelihood of more fluctuant value systems.

Closely aligned with repetition is the use of bombardment as a means of muddying discourse, which makes it more difficult to discern fact from fiction. When one does not have a good argument to support a position, a multiplicity of flawed arguments can be used. “If only there be enough of them kept running through the headlines, an *avalanche* of arguments” can signal a “*quantitative* mode of propaganda” (Burke PLF 151). This works symbolically by creating the impression of where there is smoke there must be fire. Even when none of the arguments is good, it creates the perception that something is amiss when a constant barrage of attacks is made against an idea or a person. This effect is magnified by current

communication technologies. The advent of blogs makes this tool of propaganda easier to utilize. The common practice of blogs linking to each other allows a message that originated from a single source to reach masses of people, and when enough blogs have connected to the story, it is frequently found to be newsworthy by traditional news organizations, which furthers the reach of the message. The symbolic power of this tactic cannot be understated. Once a critical mass has been reached, the entelechial drive of the messages are able to affect how people understand and value the world.

The fourth aspect of propaganda that Burke outlines is the “materialization of a religious pattern” (Burke PLF 166), where the devil is “materialized, in the visible, point-to-able form of people with a certain kind of ‘blood’” (167). While Burke wrote of this in the context of Hitler’s characterization of Jews, this same practice can be seen in much of the discourse that surrounds the war on terror that arose after the attacks on 9-11. The war was framed as one of good against evil; the enemies were characterized as evil-doers, and a vast array of terrorist organizations were succinctly lumped together under the heading of Islamo-fascists. Because evil is all encompassing and all powerful, any means necessary to fight it becomes morally acceptable, and anyone who materially embodies the key characteristics of the evil-doer will always be suspect. From this emerges policies that are on face anathema to traditional American values; preemptive war, extraordinary rendition, torture, secret detention facilities, suspension of habeas corpus, spying on Americans, etc. are all the entelechial outcome of the framing of the war on terror and the nature of the enemies

it embodies. While no actual connection existed between Iraq and the 9-11 attackers, the materialization of the enemy in *all* Muslims ensured that the two would be valued as one and the same in the extant because they had been identified with each other symbolically.

While all of the examples used to illustrate the previous points about propaganda are negative, this does not mean that propaganda cannot be used for positive ends. Propaganda has taken on negative connotations because of the ways in which it has historically been used to reach ends that were fundamentally anti-human in nature. However, the good use of the didactic is not usually recognized. To illustrate my point, I will turn to an example from my home state of North Dakota. When the state legislature initially passed a law requiring the mandatory use of seatbelts, it was widely disliked, and the populace overturned it through a popular referendum. The legislature again passed the same law, which was again overturned by the voting public. However, the third time the law was passed, the public let it remain on the books. During the several year period between the initial passing of the law and the final acceptance of it, the state engaged in a large public relations campaign outlining the necessity of the law. Even though the safety data and the long-term implications for federal highway funds were all known at the time the laws were initially overturned, the constant repetition of the ideas via public service announcements seemingly altered the way in which the public valued the laws, moving from an attitude of rejection to one of acceptance.

While Burke largely focused on the negative aspects of propaganda, he did outline one area where he elucidated the positive or the corrective use of propaganda, which is in the area of the aesthetic. The “relation between art and propaganda...is a vital one” because “aesthetical values are intermingled with ethical values—and the ethical is the basis of the practical” (PLF 201). “Probably for this reason, even the most practical of revolutions will generally be found to have manifested first in the ‘aesthetic’ sphere” (201). What this indicates is that the aesthetic is the realm of the imagination, the realm in which people are able to first visualize a social order and/or value system that is not yet in existence, and once an alternative vision is released into the social texture, it has the possibility of changing people’s attitudes toward the extant order because when an “orthodox rhetorical weighting is poetically undone, then a tiny verbal revolution has taken place. And a vigilant orthodoxy might choose to be outraged at this implied threat to the given social order” (SOM 42). As such, the aesthetic has the possibility of serving a corrective function when the values of the social order have become imbalanced (PLF 276).

Burke analyzed the necessity of art as a social corrective in the context of a capitalist system that he perceived as having created an imbalance in the social network. While he saw the potential for art to counteract this, he also recognized that art can be used to maintain a flawed order. It is important to keep in mind that the didactic is a form of rhetoric and as with all forms, it is amoral. Hence, it can be used in ways that are beneficial for the social order and its constituent members as well as in ways that are deleterious for some or all of the order’s members. If art “leads us to

a state of acquiescence at a time when the very basis or moral integration is in question, we get a paradox whereby the soundest adjunct to ethics, the aesthetic, threatens to uphold an unethical question” (Burke PLF 276). The important distinction to be drawn is between art that “carries the social patterns into their corresponding ‘imaginative’ pattern” which “tends to substantiate or corroborate these patterns” (276) because this art limits “itself to merely using the values which arise out of a given social texture” (277). Hence, for the aesthetic to function as a corrective to the entelechial push of the current regime it must emerge from outside the current value system. Drawing upon currently accepted modes of understanding will most likely be co-opted by the existing system, which allows system to be reinforced and perpetuated.

The role that art plays in social understanding of values will be further analyzed in the discussion of symbols of authority and their relationship with popular culture in chapter nine. For now, it is important to note that current technology and the proliferation of messages transmitted via new mediums is likely to alter the ways in which valuations are formed and altered. I will now move the discussion of valuation to symbols of authority, which are the iconic representations of the value system of the order. When in a frame of acceptance, people pledge allegiance to the symbols of authority, and when in a frame of rejection, the symbols of authority are no longer acceptable to members of the order. In frames of transition, the authoritative symbols are contested. In chapters seven through nine, I explore the

notion of symbols of authority and the ways in which they change over time based upon the attitudes held by members of the order.

Chapter 7: Symbols of Authority

At their core, the collective poems of socioeconomic orientation trace the value hierarchies of a culture. Every society is ordered. Hierarchies exist and value judgments are made regarding people, places, events, ideas, etc.; if these orderings are to be created and maintained, a sense of authority needs to be vested in the system itself, and symbolic representations of those bases of authority are established. These “symbols of authority” represent, on a societal level, the aggregate of attitudes toward “rulers, courts, parliaments, laws, educators, constabulary, and the moral slogans linked with such” (Burke ATH 329). The symbols reflect the value code of a social order and function to iterate and reinforce it. The symbols of authority can be officially ordained and enacted such as the United States Constitution, or they can emerge from unofficial channels like popular culture. While some symbols are maintained for an extended period of time and give the appearance of being static, the reality is that “counter” symbols constantly challenge and compete with those that are dominant. Hence, symbols of authority are best understood as fluid constructs that are altered by competition among symbols, which is pushed by changes at the individual and social level. While Burke is largely concerned with the symbols of authority of societies, it is important to note that all social groupings no matter how small contain them. As such, each individual is likely to pledge allegiance to a variety of symbols of authority that may well come into conflict with each other. This pressure is, in part, what ensures that the value ridden symbols will not remain static.

For Burke, society is an amalgamation of individual motivations that are frequently in conflict with each other (ATH 264) but are pulled together because of the interdependence of the human condition (234). The process of identification occurs when people perceive that they have overlapping interests (ROM 20). It is this act of identification that allows society to function because the individual is both transcended and preserved. “In being identified with B, A is ‘substantially one’ with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives” (21). A healthy culture provides outlets for individuated interests while at the same time maintaining cohesion. Rhetoric is a necessary element of this balancing act; both intentional and unintentional communicative behaviors can function to increase social cohesion via identification (20). Hence, identification is a requirement of any social unit; without it, society would cease to exist. However, it is a double-edged sword; its dialectical counterpart is division. The line between the two is often blurry (25), and as identification increases, division necessarily follows as greater identification with one element leads to greater separation from that which is contrary to that which with one is identifying (34). This idea will be explored in greater detail when I discuss alienation. For now, I want to highlight the relationship between social cohesion, identification, and symbols of authority. It is identification that imbues symbols of authority with their power. If people do not identify with particular symbols, they have little power over the individual. Identification is a necessary element of persuasion (xiv), and people will not grant fealty to authoritative symbols without it.

The authority symbols of a given social order are represented linguistically in the conventional forms of its era (Burke CS 138-40), and it is important to note that “the conventional forms demanded by one age are as resolutely shunned by another” (139). Hence, the interrelationship between the value expressed and the form that it is expressed in is a significant element of the power of authoritative symbols. The form of the message may be as important as the message itself because the form can be compelling irrespective of the message that it encapsulates. Every social unit has preferred forms, and their use functions as a means of ingratiation that facilitates identification and hence, persuasion (P&C 50-1). The form leads to acceptance of the idea because of the appeal of the form itself on an aesthetic level (ROM 59). The previous analysis of the interaction between aesthetic and moral valuation takes on import when examining the ways in which symbols of authority function rhetorically. Consider the example of lynching. When acts of lynching were at their highest, horrific acts of barbarity were seen by many Americans as an acceptable response to conflicts emerging from the renegotiation of race relations that arose after emancipation. It was not uncommon for ministers to support tacitly and in many instances explicitly the act of the lynch mob.⁵⁵ The message of the righteousness of torturing and killing Blacks is inconsistent with the precepts of the teaching of Jesus. However, because the approbations were emitted from “men of God” in the form of sermons, members of the lynch mob could justify their behaviors as fulfilling God’s wishes. In addition, the common assessment that lynching was a necessary remedy

⁵⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the relationship between Southern churches and lynching see Walter White, Rope and Faggot (New York: Arno Press 1969).

when the judicial system was unable to provide justice to the aggrieved allowed the lynch mobs to rhetorically borrow the symbols of authority from the rights embodied in the law. The message had greater rhetorical force because of the form it took. Acts of barbarity that should have been viewed as beyond the purview of a civilized society became not only socially acceptable but also approved. Lynching moved beyond the somber act of hanging a person to festivals of bloodlust and torture wherein entire communities would celebrate the torture, killing and burning of numerous Black people. The act of lynching was turned into an aesthetically pleasing recreational event.⁵⁶ Because lynching was given moral authority, the act itself became aesthetically pleasing.

The interaction of form and content and the transfer of valuations between the moral and the aesthetic realms take on increased import in contemporary society. Historically, symbols of authority were largely derived from social institutions that were unlikely to change rapidly such as religion, legal systems, government forms etc. However, in contemporary society the potential sources of authority symbols have expanded exponentially as the emergence of information technology allows information and ideas to be transmitted globally within a matter of seconds. The leveling of the world, which has occurred as a result of technology and a globalized economic system that guarantees cultures cannot exist in isolation, ensures that distinct value systems with their accompanying symbols of authority are forced to

⁵⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the festival-like aspect of lynching see Phillip Dray, At the Hands of Persons Unknown (New York: Random House 2002).

compete with each other in a way that was not previously possible.⁵⁷ When the competing symbols interact with each other, they cannot help but be altered as new variables enter into the system. The resultant change could be a relative strengthening of one set of symbols of authority vis-à-vis the other, or it could mean a merging of the two systems wherein both absorb elements of the other, or numerous other permutations. Nevertheless, neither grouping will remain unaltered.

This phenomenon is magnified by a concurrent decentralization of power within the social order. Historically allegiance to the church or to the state suggested that the most powerful symbols of authority emanated from formal institutions. However, in a contemporary, multicultural society these assumptions can no longer be held to be true. The notion of a set of universal authority symbols within a social order is no longer a given. I do not mean that historically there were never competing symbol systems. What I do mean is that the competing symbols were distinct in a very narrow sense of the word. Consider the case of the Protestant Reformation. Even though there were significant disagreements regarding specific Church doctrines and who had the ability to access the Bible and hence, God, the competing symbols of authority were still constrained by the history of Christianity and the words of the Bible. While it is true that the ramifications of the Reformation were significant, at the time when the symbols of authority shifted, the movement in church doctrine itself was somewhat minor. People still looked to churches and to the Christian God as the source of authority. While the reformation lead to social conflict

⁵⁷ For an in depth discussion of this issue see Tyler Cowen, Creative Destruction: How Globalization is Changing the World's Cultures (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

the number of factions at the time were limited. However, in contemporary America, a consensus no longer exists about the sources of authority. While religion is still a powerful source, the competing religions do not agree on the ultimate source of religious authority, i.e. there is a disagreement about the nature of God (if one exists), what documents express the will of God, and how those documents should be interpreted and understood. This incongruity is magnified by the strength of other cultural factors, such as elements of popular culture that do not explicitly proclaim a value system but embody value claims, which can provide sources for emergent symbols of authority.

It is my belief that the increased fluidity of symbols of authority in contemporary America has magnified two problems. The first is that individual identity is increasingly fragmented as the competing symbols of authority push people into myriad directions, which makes it difficult to reconcile the fragmentation. This can facilitate a focus on ideological and virtual valuations that permit the individual to symbolically reconcile that which is irreconcilable in the extant world. While this may be an effective means to resolve cognitive dissonance, it has the potential to lead to problems when decisions are made based upon ideologies that are at significant odds with the extant. Second, the social order is implicated because fewer enduring symbols of authority exist. This makes it more difficult to identify strongly with society, which increases the risk of alienation. In the next section, I will trace the path that has precipitated these conditions.

Sources and Systems of Symbols of Authority

Burke argues that historically there have been three key sources of authority that are based on distinct rationalizations: magic, religion, and science (P&C 44). They “are alike in that they foster a body of thought concerning the nature of the universe and man’s relation to it” (CS 163). Derivative from this, they provide—at a minimum they have been construed as providing—a macro-foundation for societal valuation in that they offer explanations of the human condition and its relationship to the broader physical and spiritual realms. I believe these three still retain power in contemporary society, and I will provide a summary of each, and explain how their interactions with each other have shaped value discourse in America. I will also argue that “word magic,” Burke’s conception of the magic of language, plays an increasingly important role in the ways in which values are formed and disseminated in the contemporary era. As the complexity of the social and physical environment has increased, our reliance on the power of language has also increased.

Magic

Initially, Burke believes that certain social forces developed, in part, as a means to organize and rationalize the social order because they provide macroscopic explanations of the extant world. The first is magic, which attempts “the control of natural forces” for human benefit (P&C 59). The central core of historic, nature-based belief systems is that nature could be channeled to the benefit of humans using different magical incantations and rituals. For example, natural forces such as rain

and drought were believed to be the result of favor or fury caused by human behavior, and if humans enacted the correct magic, they would be able to corral the forces of nature. While the role of magic no longer plays a dominant role in most modern cultures, its presence is still visible in contemporary America. People frequently have superstitions that play a role in how they conduct themselves in a personal and public way. Many high rise buildings eschew the number thirteen; even though the buildings have an actual thirteenth floor, the use of the number is frequently avoided as the buttons in the elevator move from floor twelve to fourteen. Athletes commonly have rituals they perform or superstitions they enact in the belief that their performances depend upon them. Some players will not wash their socks in between games while on a winning streak, while baseball fans and players will frequently not mention the fact that a pitcher is pitching a no-hitter in order to avoid jinxing him. Entire mythologies have been constructed that explain why certain professional sports teams are unable to win their respective national championship. The Boston Red Sox finally overcame the curse of Bambino in 2005 when they won the World Series, but the Chicago Cubs are still suffering under the curse of the billy goat. Even in the world of competitive academic debate—a community that prides itself in research and rational argumentation—superstitions are engaged. When I was a competitor, hotel room keys where previous debaters had stayed when they excelled at the national tournament were passed down to be carried for luck by the next generation of debaters. Debaters from a rival school worked to keep the “debate gods” happy, so as

not to suffer their wrath, which was usually expressed in an early exit from the tournament for the offending team.

While the preceding examples are somewhat different from the original expressions of magic found in pre-monotheistic belief structures, they still serve a similar function of providing a symbolic outlet for that which cannot be control. Luck is an inherent part of life; sometimes circumstances are fortuitous and sometimes they are not. Just as many historical cultures attempted to control the luck of natural happenings, many modern day superstitions attempt to control those things that are necessarily out of one's control. Fans cannot actually affect whether or not a pitcher can maintain a no-hitter by not saying it out loud, but the belief in the superstition provides an outlet to channel their hopes and frustrations. The Chicago Cubs and the Boston Red Sox have consistently had loyal and supportive fan bases in spite of less than stellar performances from their respective teams; this is in part because of the superstitions surrounding their clubs. Magical beliefs can provide an outlet for emotions that cannot otherwise be as readily mollified, and hence, they remain as a force in modern society.

Religion

In the second rationalization of religion, the desire is to control and channel human forces (Burke P&C 59). While religions offer metaphysical explanations for a plethora of human questions, one of their practical effects on individuals and social orders is to provide a moral code that contains within it a system of discipline and reward. Monotheistic religions are frequently conceptualized metaphorically as a

family unit wherein the Godhead is a father-like figure who simultaneously provides discipline and love. Burke argues that this linguistic transference of words from the secular to the sacred is necessary because it is the only way in which individuals can understand a god figure, and this transference provides a rich tool of analysis to interrogate human motivations (OHN 172-209; ROR 1-42). This assumption holds equally true for the understanding of valuation because the Godhead represents the pinnacle of values; the words that are used to describe God are derived from those things we find valuable, and the words used to describe Satan illustrate the inverse.

For Burke, symbols for the sacred and profane are but two sides of the same coin (ROM 256), which allows for conceptual slippage between the two realms and has significant consequences for questions of valuation within a society.

Monotheistic religions are necessarily hierarchical in nature and provide the value system that justifies said hierarchy. This corresponds with the structured nature of the social order, which privileges some over others. Hence, a dialectical motivation exists behind the “convertibility between terms for social hierarchy and terms for theological hierarchy” (232). This linguistic phenomenon can push symbol users into an entelechial trajectory where symbols are thoughtlessly converted in a way that supports certain social hierarchies while rejecting other means of ordering society. The Godhead in the three major monotheistic religions is presumed to be a male, which seamlessly corresponds with the assumptions of the patriarchal societies from which they emerged. The father figure becomes the central authority symbol in both the realm of the sacred and the profane, and hence, is the final arbiter of valuations.

The entelechial properties of symbol systems guarantee that certain valuations will seem “natural” and beyond question until the linkage to the sacred is broken.

Furthermore, the convertibility of symbols between the sacred and the profane can be done purposively to provide greater force to partisan valuations (Burke ROM 299). Religious beliefs have been used throughout history to justify hierarchies and their enforcement by any means necessary. Religion is used politically via the process of identification, which allows secular goals to be conflated with sacred decree in an effort to make them beyond question (299). Religion has at points in history been used as a trump card to justify some of the most egregious and horrific actions perpetuated by humans. From jihadist suicide bombers to preachers inciting lynch mobs, the history of religion is rife with manipulations that move it from “a good device into a bad device” (P&C 249). I do not mean to imply that religion is necessarily a negative social force; it certainly has many positive aspects for individuals and social orders, but it is important to note that the transference of authority symbols between the sacred and profane can and does lead to the profaning of the sacred. Consequently, an examination of the rhetorical trajectory of any religion will find instances of transcendence upward and downward as ideals move between the sacred and the profane.

Science

While religion remains a dominant source of valuation, the third rationalization of science has constructed a trajectory that is also a powerful force in society. Science, according to Burke, rationalizes society around attempts to control

technology for human benefit (P&C 59). The scientific revolution provided a rationalization, which attempted to explain human existence based upon that which is observable within the natural world. The consequence of this was a worldview wherein an entelechial push suggested that actions should be taken merely because we could. The research that led to the development of nuclear weapons is an example of this phenomenon. While the final push of the Manhattan project was undertaken as a result of a particular political judgment in the time of war, the scientific groundwork had already been done. The rationalization of the scientific frame changed the nature of authority symbols. As technological advances occurred, they were valued based upon the usefulness of the end product (CS 63). Hence, the combustion engine was positively evaluated because it made traversing the United States significantly easier; however, the overwhelming positive associations of the automobile has had significant unintended consequences. Urban centers were designed to allow for easy movement of traffic, which helped to facilitate white flight to the suburbs, the development of exburbs, and a phalanx of other issues such as global warming and a seriously underdeveloped mass transportation system. What ultimately became a destructive force emerged as a symbol of authority as a result of the entelechial push of the rationalization of science.

The entelechial push of the scientific revolution contributed to an increased secularization of society's standards of valuation, including of the ethical, the religious and the aesthetic (Burke P&C 45) as rationality "brings forward demands of its own" (149). Scientific inquiry became a good in its own right; educational

systems demanded excellence in the science curriculum; the nation's resources were turned toward technological developments from NASA to DARPA. A moon landing and the internet⁵⁸ are but two of the advances made from these scientific pushes, and both breakthroughs were symbolically wrapped in a cloak of valuation. The United States *had* to reach the moon because if we did not the Soviets would beat us there. The internet was developed to facilitate military communication, which was *necessary* if we were to remain a world superpower. In the former example, it was imperative that the United States reach this pinnacle of space exploration before the Soviet Union because it was our *duty* and *right* to do so. The Soviet Union was a totalitarian nation that was dangerous and the protection of the free world *necessitated* that the United States reach the moon first.⁵⁹ In the latter, a valuation was made by America that we needed to be a world superpower, and consequently, we funded our military at rates that far surpassed the rest of the globe to reach that goal.⁶⁰ The internet is but one of the technological discoveries that had a dual-use benefit that was derived from this expenditure of resources. For decades, America embraced the entelechial pull of the scientific rationalization.

Word Magic

⁵⁸ For further detail about how U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) laid the groundwork for today's internet see Histories of the Internet, February 5 2008, Internet Society, Available: <http://www.isoc.org/internet/history/cerf.shtml>, July 24 2008.

⁵⁹ For a brief history of the space race between the United States and the Soviet Union and how it was valued in the U.S. as a necessity to preserve the free world see Going to the Moon: The Apollo Mission, July 16 2008, StarWrite.org, Available: http://www.starwrite.org/apollo_missions.html, July 24 2008.

⁶⁰ In 2008, the United States accounted for 48% of global military spending. To see the break down see Anup Shah, World Military Spending, March 1 2008, Global Issues, Available: <http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/ArmsTrade/Spending.asp#InContextUSMilitarySpendingVersusRestoftheWorld>, July 24 2008.

Underlying the three rationalizations is symbol use and what Burke refers to as “word magic.” Each of the rationalizations uses language to construct an understanding of the universe and humanity’s place within it. Without language none of the rationalizations would exist; as such, they cannot be understood without first understanding the role of word magic in the formation of human value systems. Burke borrows the term “magic” metaphorically and uses it to explain the way language adds elements to human existence that are outside of the material and sensory. Values are necessarily derived from word magic because they are ideals that are not found in nature (Briggs 369-72). The manipulation of symbol systems provides a means by which social orders are constructed and maintained, and as such this expanded view of magic becomes the central rationalization as it pertains to value questions—without it values would not exist. I will first discuss the basis of word magic, and then I will explain its implications for valuation.

Traditional magic functioned as a matter of decree (Burke PLF 5), and it is the act of decree wherein language becomes word magic.⁶¹ “The magical decree is implicit in all language; for the mere act of naming an object or situation decrees that it be singled out as such-and-such rather than something-other” (5). However, it is important to draw a distinction between naming that which is extant, i.e. the physical world, and naming that which is a uniquely human construction. While naming that

⁶¹ Burke argues that a distinction between false magic and true magic exists. False magic is that which pretends to change “the laws of motion” Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969). 65, while “‘true’ magic prevails *outside* the realm of motion, in the area of more-than-motion that we call *action*” Burke, GOM, 65. Hence, magic is a misunderstanding of physical processes, whereas “word magic” is the ability of humans to use language to imagine that which is not in a way that allows for the creation of new ideals and material products (technology).

which exists in nature does shape our understanding and can provide value assessments of that which is named, Burke draws a distinction with that which is an entirely human construct. “This enables us to equate magic with novelty” (GOM 66), which is found in “every human act; for each act contains some measure of motivation that cannot be explained simply in terms of the past, being to an extent, however tiny, a new thing” (65). Hence, language is “magical” because it can create something out of nothing.

One such construct is the negative, which is a critical element derived from human consciousness; “there are no negatives in nature,” and “this ingenious addition to the universe is solely a product of human symbol systems” (Burke LAS 9). The negative has two significant aspects; the propositional negative—it is not—and the hortatorical negative—thou shall not. The former provides the basis of scientific inquiry while the latter establishes the ability to moralize and is foundational to religious and ethical thought (421). Science is based on observation and classification, which requires the ability to establish that something is not something else. Mathematics, which provides the basis for much physical science, is also dependent upon the existence of the zero and negative numbers.⁶² Moral inquiry requires an understanding of the ideal—that which is not. Without the negative, moral claims that are tribal in nature, such as the Ten Commandments, could not exist. While simple “moral” claims exist in nature, they are actions that merely

⁶² Ed Appel argues that the entire theory of relativity is completely dependent upon the notion of the negative and human ability to conceptualize that which is not. Edward C. Appel, “Implications and Importance of the Negative in Burke’s Dramatistic Philosophy of Language,” Communication Quarterly 41.1 (1993).

indicate that thou shall not do that to me—such as when one cat claws another for attempting to steal its food. These claims, however, differ drastically from morality that arises from a social order. Morality in this sense is dependent upon universalizing the claims and having them turned back on the individual, and is only possible with abstract thought that is derived from the negative (439). Taken together, these two aspects of the negative provide the foundation for modern society. The technological innovations that make modern life possible could not exist without first having developed the concept of the negative and the complex social structure in which we reside are dependent upon the bureaucratization of the hortatory negative.

Moral law is by its nature founded in the negative because it constrains natural impulses (Burke LAS 442), and it is through these constraints that complex social orders are developed. Burke believes that morality is implicit in language, and as the symbol using animal, humans are driven to seek a moral structure of some sort. He argues that the logical end-point of language is in “justice,” “a kind of *completion* whereby laws are so universalized that they also apply to the lawgiver” (LAS 440). However, the ideal of justice and morality is founded in language, which is never an exact match of the extant.

But though we say that universalization, or following-through-to-the-end-of-the-line, comes easy to language, we should add two qualifications: (1) The orderly perfection of such thoroughness, in art or thought, brings up strains intrinsic to the medium; (2) morally, a further strain arises when we attempt to embody in practice what we have conceived of in principle. (LAS 440)

Hence, that which is based in symbolicity will not always be able to come to fruition. Consequently, moral systems seldom—if ever—match the ideals they espouse, and their bureaucratization will necessarily be unjust as the moral decrees of the order are followed and enforced inconsistently.

At their base level, moral decrees will never be consistently followed by all members of society. For some, the compulsion of biological drives will not be constrained by the morals of the order. For others, the symbols of authority of the order will not provide a compelling reason to not engage in “immoral” behaviors as other motivations outstrip the ability of the social order to impel individual adherence. However, it is important to note the role that word magic plays in preventing the culmination of the moral order. While language proper may push toward justice, human use of language impedes the ability of language to actually reach its entelechial fruition. One way this commonly occurs is through the use of the propositional negative via definition to undermine the universalization of the hortatorical. Historically many of the greatest atrocities of human behavior have occurred because certain segments of the population were defined as not being a member of the human tribe. African Americans were determined to be incapable of moral thought because they were driven by the sensuous; derived from this definitional maneuver was the necessity to tightly constrain their actions and behaviors, which justified slavery and in the post-War South, lynching and Jim Crow laws. Native Americans were similarly defined as “savages” who needed to be properly educated in moral thought. Burke’s essay “The Rhetorical of Hitler’s

Battle” outlines the rhetorical process that Hitler and his minions utilized to define the Jews as not only “not human” but also an evil threat to “real humans” (PLF 164-189).

In particular, dialectical terms that are resistant to transcendence are one means by which the propositional negative—albeit with hidden rhetorical weightings—precludes the universalization of the hortatorical to include all members of social order. Consider, for example, the linguistic construct of good versus evil. The Oxford English Dictionary notes that “evil” as a “word is the most comprehensive adjectival expression of disapproval, dislike, or disparagement” (n.p.). Given the symbolic weighting of the word, when a person is defined as evil, it is unlikely that he will be considered as part of the community to whom the hortatorical negative ought to apply. When President Bush initially labeled all al Qaeda members as evil-doers and framed the War on Terror as a battle between good and evil, he was presaging the tactics and policies that would likely emanate from his administration. Extraordinary rendition, mass jailings and torture were the logical derivatives of his rhetorical choices. Once defined as evil, terrorists could not be considered part of the civilization that created such things as the Geneva Convention; hence, they were not deserving of the protections proffered by the treaty. As God, the ultimate good, banished Satan, the ultimate evil, the evil in the world must be expelled, and since evil knows no boundaries, the “good” cannot be constrained by rules that “evil-doers” will not follow. To do so would render good impotent against evil.

This is but one example of how the use of the propositional negative—without acknowledging its weighting—can undercut the ability of the hortatorical to reach its

completion in justice. However, the hortatorical system can also use the propositional negative to further its own ends by defining something that in reality is an “ought not” as an “is not.” I believe that many historical and contemporary conflicts between religion and science can be illuminated by examining the conflation of the propositional negative with the hortatorical negative and vice versa. In the next section, I examine the interacting trajectories of the rationalizations and word magic to illustrate this point.

The Interacting Trajectories of Word Magic and the Rationalizations

It is not uncommon to view human existence as a linear progression that moved from primitive magic, to religion, to science. However, this view is overly simplistic in its assessment of human motivation and values, to which Burke acknowledges that he too succumbed. “Rather than thinking of magic, religion, and science as three distinctly successive stages in the world’s history, the author would now use a mode of analysis that dealt with all three aspects of motivation ‘forever born anew’ in the resources of language as such” (P&C lix). Therefore, I will analyze the trajectories of the rationalizations and the way in which symbol systems have shaped our understanding of them and the conflicts which emerged from them.

One of the most significant aspects of the scientific revolution—from the perspective of valuation—is the ability to create, gather, shape, and transmit information. Manipulating⁶³ and transmitting information has always played a large role in shaping the moral code of a society. For an extreme example consider Nazi

⁶³ By manipulating information I mean any effort undertaken to shape how others understand and/or evaluate the information being presented. Hence, I am including everything from traditional rhetoric to outright fabrication.

Germany. Hitler mastered the use of propaganda and the symbolic manipulation of authority and anti-authority symbols. The swastika was prominently portrayed in all realms of one's existence, the presence of goose-stepping troops parading down the streets, and doctors who transferred the moral status of their profession to efforts at eugenics and human experimentation, all displayed the power and control of the Nazi regime. As Burke outlines in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's Battle," the enactment of Hitler's system of valuation could only lead to death and destruction. Much of Hitler's power was established via anti-authority symbols, those symbols which marked people who were viewed as not worthy of membership in society. The Jews were forced to wear a yellow Star of David. These images aided in establishing a social hierarchy that demarcated who was considered human, and hence, worthy of being treated as such; they also delimited who was deemed to be not only less than human but anathema to the existence of "real" humans, and hence, deserving of extermination. These symbols of authority and anti-authority helped Hitler and the Nazi party implement a new value system. One of the ways in which his regime was able to do this was to control access to information and what could be said in public and private. This allowed the symbols to be deployed without being contested. They had absolute authority; any word to the contrary was met with swift and violent reprisals.

Technological advances, however, have changed the operating environment significantly from the World War II era. The internet, cell phones, digital imaging, blackberrys, web sites such as Youtube and Myspace, etc. have all made it easy to

gather, record and transmit information in a matter of seconds. The rapidity by which information can be transmitted has altered systems of valuation around the globe and increased conflict among competing symbols of authority. While Burke outlined three key rationalizations for societal authority symbols, he did not mean to imply that the rationalizations were mutually exclusive. Each provides its own trajectory that advances based upon its entelechial underpinnings and by its interaction with other systems and phenomena. “By definition human ‘Bodies That Learn Language’ go on being born anew, to experience the creative *magic* of the world, the personal extensions of *religion*, and the pragmatics of knowledge (*science*);” however “the character and relative proportions of such ingredients will vary greatly in different cultural situations” (P&C 307). At points in history the competing systems of science and religion have coincided with great ease; at other times they have come into open conflict, and word magic has played a role in each of the battles. Consider the scientific theory of evolution. When Darwin first unveiled it, it was met with much fear and uncertainty. The famous Scope’s Monkey Trial in 1925, which challenged the teaching of evolution in public schools, illustrates the degree to which some would go to prevent the theory from being disseminated. The fear was that it would undermine belief in God as creator of the earth. However, as time went on many people found a permutation of the two principles that allowed them to operate in harmony with each other. God was the creator, but evolution was the mechanism that was used to carry out God’s plan. At these points, the standard for valuation is consistent between the two frames; the phenomenon of evolution is merely an

example of the greatness of God. The agonistic relationship between the two ideas was symbolically transcended, and the two systems operated in concord with each other.

This type of verbal transcendence is critical to understanding how revaluation occurs in society. Dialectical terms, which are agonistic to each other (Burke GOM 33-5) or apply to “fictitious” entities such as the law (ROM 184), are at their root ethical because they have moved beyond mere description and require judgments to be made (53-4, 185). When seemingly inconsistent principles cease to be opposites, verbal transcendence has occurred (ATH 337). In the above example, different understandings of how the world originated were joined together into one system of valuation through transcendent rhetoric. When transcendence happens, the underlying ideas and values are necessarily altered in the process (ROM 314), and a certain level of discounting has to occur to explain why the apparent inconsistencies are no longer relevant (ATH 328). When successful, transcendence allows for the creation of a stable source of valuation.

However, what appears to be transcendent may not be. Divisions can be rhetorically masked, which can give the appearance of unity, even when the divisions still exist in the extant world (Burke ROM 45). Hence, that which can be symbolically transcended can also be descended. The symbolic merger of science and religion was maintained because the two systems both benefited from the relationship. It meant that the belief in God did not prevent one from enjoying the benefits of modern knowledge and technology. The advent of the automobile and

electrification were seen by many as a gift from God, an example of humankind using God's generosity to better our condition. Even so, the relationship proved not to be sustainable as the pace of scientific development outstripped society's collective ability to adapt its standards of valuation to the alterations, and scientific discoveries again became agonistic to many people's religious beliefs; the unlocking of the human genome along with the genomes of a plethora of other animals called into question the uniqueness of the human species. It is more difficult to place oneself in an exalted position when only five percent of one's DNA is distinct from that of a chimpanzee.⁶⁴ When these sorts of incongruities became overwhelming for some, a religious backlash against scientific thought re-emerged,⁶⁵ and the two systems waged symbolic battle against each other, as both sides attempted to control the key symbols of societal authority.

During the last two decades of the 20th century, and still continuing today, a plethora of religious organizations began a concerted campaign to undermine the legitimacy of evolution. Complaints lodged with local school boards led a number of districts to stop teaching evolution altogether as a part of their science curriculum and in some instances discussions of creationism were added. A new rhetorical strategy was unfurled as the gains of the movement were lost as courts struck down these moves as a violation of the constitutional mandate of separation of church and state. Because creationism was rejected as a result of its clear religious underpinnings, anti-

⁶⁴ For an explanation how this percentage was derived see Roy J. Britten, "Divergence between Samples of Chimpanzee and Human DNA Sequences Is 5%, Counting Indels," *PNAS* 99.21 (2002).

⁶⁵ I do not want to imply that specific rhetorical choices from religious activists did not play a role in this backlash. They certainly played a significant role, but my argument is that this rhetoric gained presence when scientific discoveries began to seem incompatible with some people's core beliefs.

evolutionists developed the concept they referred to as Intelligent Design. Its precepts suggest that the earth and its inhabitants are so complex that the only rational explanation is that there is a designer of some kind. Because those who could not reconcile scientific discoveries with their religious faith were unable to justify their beliefs to the broader society with a religious argument, they altered their discourse to construct a scientific basis for their counter to the theory of evolution. In spite of legal setbacks, the movement continued to alter the public's understanding of evolution.⁶⁶ In 2007, during the first Republican Party debate of the 2008 presidential primary, three of the ten candidates indicated that they did not believe in the theory of evolution (Seelye 10). At the same time, the *Answers in Genesis* ministry opened a creationism museum in Kentucky that had visual representations of dinosaurs coexisting with humans in our present form in its effort to spread the belief that the earth is only six-thousand-years old.⁶⁷ Part of this conflict emanates from competing negatives, as some believe that a reliance on the propositional negative (science) will undermine the power of the hortatorical negative as defined by certain religious sects. At the time of writing, this battle between religious fundamentalists and scientists is far from over. Nevertheless, this conflict illuminates the way in which symbolic ideals are rhetorically altered when intransigence exists within the social order.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of how the belief in evolution has declined as a result of religious belief see Jon D. Miller, "Science Communication: Public Acceptance of Evolution," *Science* 313:5788 (2006).

⁶⁷ Ken Ham, the museums founder, makes it clear that for him, the only legitimate science is science that is grounded in biblical readings. "Why would any Christian want to take man's fallible dating methods and use them to impose an idea on the *infallible* Word of God? Christians who accept billions of years are in essence saying that man's word is infallible, but God's Word is fallible!" See Ken Ham, *A Young Earth--It's Not the Issue*, January 1998, *Answers in Genesis*, Available: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/docs/1866.asp>, July 24 2008.

Efforts at revaluation are generally met with resistance at first; however, the dialectical process allows for, albeit does not guarantee, the rhetorical rebirth of an idea that emerges from the ashes of its previous instantiation; however, the re-emergent idea will necessarily be altered in the process.

A second area in which the trajectories of religion and science have battled is in the area of sexuality. As we have gained scientific knowledge about sex and the ways in which the procreative aspect of sex can be curtailed, open battle has been waged between the two trajectories. The sexual revolution would not have been possible without the development of the pill and other forms of birth control. Sex outside of marriage has always occurred, but it historically carried a much greater risk for those who engaged in the act—for women in particular. When these disincentives were minimized by scientific discovery, the valuation of sexual activity was altered, and the turn of the 21st century is rife with rhetorical battles emanating from conflicting views of how sexual activity should be valued by society. Images of sex and sexuality infiltrate every aspect of popular culture.

As is noted on Madison Avenue, sex sells. It is used to punctuate and make more desirable everything from beer and automobiles in advertising, to musical performances and movies. Significantly, these venues represent both male and female sexual desires, and women frequently are shown to have—although not always by any stretch of the imagination—sexual agency. However, the notion of female sexual agency is contrary to many traditional social values that emanate from a male-headed nuclear family and subsequently, changes the nature of symbols of

authority.⁶⁸ On a symbolic level the push for abstinence only education is an effort to restore lost authority symbols; it has very little to do with solving problems such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Multiple studies have shown that abstinence only programs are rife with misinformation about the nature of the roles of men and women in society as well as how safe and effective varying forms of birth control are, and it has not shown to reduce the occurrence of sex among teens.⁶⁹ In spite of its failure to actually change the sexual behavior of teenagers in a positive way, many still support the program because it represents the “correct” valuation. Hence, a scientific perspective of sexuality is being eschewed by some to force a religious conception of sexuality.

Burke argues that sexual courtship is necessarily infused with motives of the social hierarchy (ROM 218). It defines the rules of who can date and marry whom and what sexual behaviors are acceptable. A part of the symbolic element of abstinence only education is to restore the rules of courtship, which support a particular societal arrangement. The elaborate rituals that correspond to certain segments of the abstinence only movement illuminate this. One such example is the purity ring ceremony, in which young girls are asked to pledge to their fathers that they will remain virgins until they marry, and the girls make this pledge publicly

⁶⁸ Historically sexual agency has been denied to women in America. Tracing the history of rape laws in America illustrates this. Married women could not be raped because their husbands had a right to sex as part of the marital contract; women who dressed provocatively or knew their attackers were deemed to have been asking for it, unmarried women who had had previous sexual relations were commonly seen as unrapeable because they had lost their virginity outside the bonds of marriage. For a detailed discussion of this see Susan Estrich, *Sex and Power*, Riverhead Books: New York (2001).

⁶⁹ See for example "Abstinence-Only Fails to Stop Early Pregnancies, Diseases," USA Today July 30 2007. Michael W Wideman, Understanding Sexuality Research (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001). pp. 82-89

during rituals that closely resemble a wedding. Vows are given, and their fathers give them bands, which look like wedding rings. What the pledges and ceremonies functionally do is to remove sexual agency from the female. It is no longer their choice to have sex when and if they desire; instead, their fathers are *willingly* given the authority to demand sexual purity until the women are *given* in marriage to their husbands.⁷⁰ This move restores the male figure as the ultimate head of the family structure and reenergizes a traditional symbol of authority, which has been losing its social force as the nuclear family has been diminished in actuality.

This symbolic act is important for some versions of Christianity since much of our understanding of the Christian god is based upon a metaphorical application of the traditional family structure, where the father figure has ultimate authority. When the nature of the family is altered, the metaphorical transference to the realm of religion will likely change the understanding of the religious code itself. This is also the source of much of the opposition to same sex marriages. Arguments that it will destroy the family make little sense when considered literally. Two men or two women marrying in no way impedes a heterosexual couple's ability to have marital bliss. But when one considers the symbolic import of the traditional nuclear family to one's metaphorical understanding of the Godhead, same sex marriages do undermine a particular vision of what Christianity ought to be. The physical family is not undermined, but the spiritual family is. This particular valuation implicates not only sexuality; it also suggests a preferred form of Christianity and as a derivative, a

⁷⁰ For a fuller description of the ceremonies see Jennifer Baumgardner, "Would You Pledge Your Virginity to Your Father," Glamour February 7 2007.

particular social order. As scientific studies increasingly illustrate that homosexuality has a biological element,⁷¹ some religious organizations have done their best to enshrine anti-gay marriage decrees in state laws and constitutions with the hope that this maneuver will ensure that homosexuality is viewed as immoral even if it is definitively proven that it is more than just a life-style choice.

On a symbolic level, sexuality will remain a focal point as competing value systems come into conflict with each other. From the perspective of some religious thought, it is necessary to control sexuality. Multiple studies indicate that the Christian religion has long sought to define the circumstances under which sex was acceptable (DeLamater 263). Burke's theory suggests that one possible reason for this is how it implicates transcendence.⁷² One symbolic value of religion⁷³ is that it provides a means of transcendence, which allows people to escape the realities of the world. It allows people to envision a world that is not polluted by human shortcomings, and it encourages people to look for guidance outside of the realm of the physical world in which we live. Controlling sexuality can be seen as a necessary element if God is to be the *exclusive* source of transcendence because sex is a mechanism that facilitates actual physical transcendence, which is not dependent upon remaining loyal to a religious order and its rules. Sex provides a physical union

⁷¹ See for example Michael W Wiederman, Understanding Sexuality Research (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2001).

⁷² I am not arguing that this is the only reason why sexuality has been controlled. Multiple factors such as social cohesion come into play, but Burke's theory suggests that from a value perspective that transcendence likely plays a role in the effort to control sexuality.

⁷³ In this discussion of religion, I am making no claims about the actual existence of God. I am attempting to illustrate the way religion functions on a symbolic level. Hence, when I discuss transcendence in this context, I do not deny the possibility of a literal transcendence to heaven.

between two people, and an orgasm allows for a fleeting moment a sense of being both within and outside of one's body.⁷⁴ The French illuminate this phenomenon by their euphemism for the orgasm: *la petit mort*—literally, the little death. This expression recognizes the transcendent, spiritual aspect of sex that can occur irrespective of one's religious beliefs and whether or not one is married when the sex act occurs. Furthermore, sex provides a means for the individual to transcend his or her physical being and to provide the possibility of immortality. When sex results in conception, a new being is formed that is both part of and separate from its parents, and the perpetuation of one's DNA through procreation allows a part of oneself to live indefinitely as long as reproduction continues to occur. This ability to reach an immortality of sorts through purely earthly activities has the potential to undermine the desire to reach transcendence in the spiritual realm, and hence, it can diminish the strength of the appeal of the religious belief, which provides a motivation to tightly constrain sexual activity. It is to only occur in relationships that have been blessed by God, which situates the physical transcendence as part and parcel of the spiritual transcendence that the religious belief allows.

Consider the case of the Catholic Church, wherein priests are expected to take a vow of celibacy and are never allowed to marry, and nuns wear a ring on their left hand expressing their symbolic marriage to Christ. These constructs reflect the danger that sexuality poses to the power of the church. It is believed that the special

⁷⁴ For a fuller discussion of the effort of some branches of Christianity to limit the physical pleasure of sex see J. Lo Piccolo and J. Heiman, "Cultural Values and the Therapeutic Definition of Sexual Function and Dysfunction," *Journal of Social Issues* 33 (1977).

relationship between the priest and God would be undermined if he were allowed to have sexual relations with another human being because physical transcendence can undermine the focus on spiritual transcendence. The status of the nun symbolically places marriage in the spiritual realm and represents the highest order of marital relationships. To be truly married to God, one cannot also be married to a human being, and the spiritual transcendence that occurs from religious devotion is represented as of a higher moral order than the physical transcendence that occurs from sex. Given that sex is a biological necessity, the Church carefully proscribes the circumstances under which it is acceptable for it to occur. It must be blessed by God through the rite of marriage. At some points in history, even within the bounds of marriage, it was only permissible for the express purpose of procreation; in other times the pleasure derived from sex was seen as a gift with which God blessed married people. In all circumstances, sexual activity is tightly circumscribed to maintain spiritual transcendence as the pinnacle of human existence.

Traditional views of masturbation also support this supposition. For years, the common appellation for the act was self-abuse. This title only makes sense if one views it from the perspective of damage to one's spiritual life. The act itself does *no physical damage* and can cause immense amounts of *physical pleasure*. In *no* way does it damage one's physicality. However, if one believes that a focus on the physical will undermine a focus on the spiritual, and if the spiritual is valued as having greater import than the physical, the label makes sense. One's spirit is

damaged by the act, and hence, it is self-abuse.⁷⁵ Given strong biological urges and the ease with which masturbation can be performed, it became urgent for the religious code to regulate it, and it was declared a sin. However, the ephemeral, spiritual threat was not always enough to prevent people from masturbating. This weakness in the force of the religious admonition led to the creation and propagation of a number of myths that also outlined a threat masturbation posed to one's physicality. Going blind and mysterious hair growth on one's palms are two of the most common. Not only would a sinner become disabled, the rest of the community would see the visible marker of his failings. This rhetorical maneuver is an instance of conflating the propositional and hortatorical negatives. The "thou shall not masturbate" was rhetorically transported into the scientific understanding of the act. This transference created a false interpretation of the act as a biological phenomenon.

From a scientific perspective masturbation can be seen as a means to gain sexual gratification without having to suffer the potential consequences of having actual sex. However, this view undermines traditional views of sexuality proffered by many religions, and when it has been expressed it has been rhetorically rejected by many religious leaders. For example, Joycelyn Elders, President Clinton's Surgeon General, was forced to resign in 1994 after suggesting that masturbation should be taught in public schools as a means to prevent sexually transmitted diseases. The normalizing effect that this would have on the act was anathema to some. In a similar

⁷⁵ For a discussion of how this view emerged within the Christian tradition from such figures as Paul, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas, and how these attitudes evolved into views of masturbation as physically harmful see Bruce McFarland, "Masturbation throughout History." 2008: [Jackinworld](http://www.jackinworld.com). Available <http://www.jackinworld.com/library/articles/history.html>, August 26, 2008

vein, Alabama went so far as to ban the sale of sex toys, which facilitate the pleasure of masturbation for many, especially women, in 1998. While the strictures of the moniker “self-abuse” are no longer dominant, elements of the value system are still present and have a role in shaping public discourse about the topic and how it ought to be understood.

While the forces of religion and science are well established in contemporary society and are currently fighting for control of symbols of authority, magic as traditionally understood no longer has the strength of the other two rationalizations. The force of the magical belief structure still exists in society, and I do not mean to underplay its significance because it does have important effects on society. From a purely economic perspective, playing with the paranormal is a substantial industry. From tarot card readers to psychics, many Americans are willing to spend a portion of their resources trying to access the magical;⁷⁶ virtually every newspaper in the country devotes several column inches to the daily horoscope. However, in terms of its overall effect on the structure of society, it plays little role in contemporary America. In comparison to the ramifications of science and religion, magic is but a minor player. Nonetheless, this does not deny the possibility of primitive magic reemerging as a social force in the future. However, when one conceptualizes magic as “word magic” its force is significant. I will explore the continuing power of word magic in the following chapter.

⁷⁶ I was unable to find an industry total for paranormal sales, but I did come across a number of websites that offered to sell me a tarot card reading for anywhere between \$50-100.

Chapter 8: Word Magic as Meta-Rationalization

The ramifications of science and religion are enormous. The contemporary era is rife with conflict between the two rationalizations, and one of the rhetorical strategies that has been utilized by both sides is an effort to control what information is disseminated and how that information ought to be framed, i.e. implicitly valued with weighted words. Efforts to control access to information have always existed. Consider the Catholic Church's resistance to publishing the Bible in common vernaculars instead of exclusively in Latin, a move that diminished the power of the priesthood and the learned population to control access to God, and hence, the terms and conditions for valuation. However, in the contemporary era access to information is harder to control, but at the same time, the desire to have information valued for one has increased. I believe that technological advances have set in motion an entelechial force that has emerged as a meta-rationalization that shapes the ways in which the preceding rationalizations function. Many have long utilized the phrase the "information age" to represent the contemporary era, but I believe the effect that information dissemination has had on contemporary society goes far beyond what this moniker implies. The name sounds much like appellations of earlier epochs, which were labeled with names such as the Stone Age or the Iron Age. These names indicated the types of tools that people used and discoveries that were made; however, in the information age, the implications of our tools go far beyond the mere furtherance of pragmatic human endeavors for a better life. Instead, they provide for a completely new system of valuation. As argued earlier, technology strongly

influences the social environment and provides the scenic backdrop of all valuations, and this environment has magnified the power of word magic. In this section I explore Burke's notion of word magic and what it means for the process of valuation in contemporary, technologized society. Specifically, I argue that information dissemination and presentation have established a meta-order in which systems of valuation are established and perpetuated in the realm of the virtual. In order to prove this argument, I will first establish the human desire for rationalized systems, or in Burkean terms hierarchy and order. Then I argue a virtual world has been created, which provides a basis for a valuation; then I contend this system has unfurled unintended consequences as its entelechial force has emerged, which has functioned as both a tool used by the competing rationalizations and as a rationalizing force itself.

One of the main reasons the major rationalizations took hold and were sustained is they established a universal account of the world; they provided stability and continuity in human relations and instituted a seemingly fixed system of valuation.⁷⁷ A perusal of millennia of philosophic and theological thought illustrates the human desire for metaphysical explanations for biological and societal phenomena. In these quests, answers to a number of questions have been sought. Two are significant for my project. The first, what is the basis for human value systems? The second, what should that value system be? These queries illuminate

⁷⁷ I do not mean that the value systems are universal and unchanging. I only want to highlight that people seem to want universal systems that appear to be fixed. In reality, the value systems do change and in some instances dramatically, but because the pace of change is usually slow and the alterations are morphed to appear to be part of the larger system, the alterations can be imperceptible.

the pull that metaphysical explanations have on the human psyche, and the desire people have for structure in their existential being, which can provide pragmatic guidance in traversing the larger world. I believe that one of the ways in which societal value systems are created is by the symbiotic interaction between the ideal that is expressed rhetorically and by the way in which the values are enacted in people's daily lives. Moral codes are expressed and codified, but the meaning of those codes is altered by the way in which they are enacted.

For example, if the moral order says that premarital sex is bad, what this means will be expressed differently across cultures, which will in turn alter the valuations and subsequent actions it calls forth. While the loss of one's virginity outside the bonds of marriage is deemed morally deficient in many societies, the consequences for violating the moral code have varied considerably across cultures and time periods. Today, women in parts of the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia risk being publicly stoned to death for even the appearance of sexual impropriety. Nathaniel Hawthorne's, *The Scarlet Letter*, illustrates the use of shunning and public humiliation as a means to enforce the moral code in early, puritanical America; Vice President Dan Quayle in 1994 bemoaned the decline of public morality when the television show *Murphy Brown* showed a single, career woman choosing to have a child out of wedlock, but the show was still wildly popular. Each of these examples illustrates the differing ways in which the expression of a moral code can be enacted. The instantiation of one's valuation is always influenced by the broader symbolic and enacted value systems, which

includes the institutions and structures that support them. This suggests that part of the entelechial push of a symbol system comes from the cultural tools available to it. Hence, in a society in which barbaric acts of violence are a standard means of punishing wrongdoing, stoning promiscuous women is a logical and emotional enactment of the larger value system. Whereas, in a culture where the act of premarital sex is highly contested, as it is in contemporary America, efforts to enforce a particular moral code largely remain in the realm of the symbolic. Outrage is expressed, but the morally induced consequences are comparatively small.

Furthermore, policy implications are present within every value system. When one adjudges something to be harmful, it follows that one should do something about it. The choice of what that something should be is based upon the interaction among the value system, the resources available and the actors involved in making the decision. In much of Europe, drug abuse is expressed as a medical problem, and countries such as Norway view needle exchange programs as a partial medical solution (Kendall A19). In the United States, we fight the War on Drugs, which means that we imprison drug users and use the military in drug interdiction efforts. A particular value system does not guarantee that a certain action will be taken, but it does prescribe the alternatives that will rise to the forefront, and the way in which the issues are expressed symbolically affects which alternative(s) will be chosen. Few question that there are real negative consequences to drug abuse; however, the means to alleviate those deleterious effects all have different existential consequences. This is not to say that a particular choice will always lead to the same result, but it does

mean that certain outcomes are more likely than others are as particular decisions are enacted. It is this interaction between valuations and their subsequent instantiations that gives the rationalizations their seeming continuity and stability. This perception of continuity in thought in turn provides people with a sense of order because it creates a system of pieties, which provides a shorthand understanding of what goes with what and what goes against what. However, in the contemporary era the rationalizations are in conflict with each other, and people are exposed to an ever expanding pool of symbols of authority from which to pledge allegiance.

People and our various institutional actors have always attempted to control *access* to information and manipulate the way information that it is disseminated is *understood*, and this practice has been used as a means to perpetuate each of the three rationalizations—magic, religion, and science—that Burke outlines. I believe, however, that the cultural byproducts of this process have led to the construction of a force that has become a new rationalization in and of itself. A globalized economic system along with the ability to instantaneously transmit information around the world has created a virtual world of valuation wherein judgments are made about people, institutions, phenomena, etc. based on an ideological or aesthetic expression of the facts, and the line between reality and symbolicity is blurred to the extent that the perception of reality can have more rhetorical force than reality itself. While this phenomenon has always existed to a certain extent, my argument is that it has taken on a greater force in the contemporary era as a result of technology and globalization.

Each of the rationalizations utilizes symbols of authority to perpetuate itself, and these symbols can be found throughout society. Historically, the number of sources for symbols of authority has been limited by the technological capacity to transmit information and the constraints of the particular social order. The first symbols of authority we learn to revere emanate from those who raise and care for us. Children understand instinctually that a social order exists when they bond with their parents, and in our early years, the authority symbols one responds to are limited. However, as we grow and gain access to broader segments of the world, we are confronted with a greater number of potential symbols that could become authoritative for us. Historically, one could confront only a finite number of sources of these powerful societal ideals, and the vast majority emanated from social institutions such as one's family, church, school, political party, etc. However, in today's world with the ability to transmit information instantaneously, the sources for authority symbols are virtually infinite, which makes it more difficult for social orders to retain shared values. To illustrate this transformation I will first detail traditional sources of symbols of authority, and I will then illustrate the ways in which contemporary circumstances have disrupted traditional constraints on whom or what can be revered, which has significant implications for the social order.

Authoritative symbols are iconic instantiations of the moral code that function by demarcating that which is right from that which is wrong. They are part of the glue that holds a social order together because they symbolically represent that to which or to whom one is expected to pledge allegiance. Social institutions are the

bureaucratization of the values of a social order (Burke ATH 225), and many symbols of authority emanate from them. The organization itself is reified and evaluated based upon how well it implements the values of the order (P&C 209). Once an institution becomes an object of valuation, it has the possibility to spawn symbols of authority that are symbolically transferred to the individual (209). The black robes and cloistered nature of the United States Supreme Court help to establish an aura of certainty and moral force. The court's human members enact the power of valuation granted to the institution of the court, and their actions help shape the level of esteem with which the court is held by members of society. The interaction between the institution and its constitutive membership shapes the way in which authoritative symbols are understood and the moral force they hold in society.

This influence, however, is not unidirectional. Once an authority symbol is established it becomes a force in and of itself. It displays for all to see an instantiation of the hierarchy of the social unit, which allows the symbol to develop an entelechial force of its own (Burke ROM 141). Burke contends humans are driven by a sense of order (LAS 15); the desire to name, classify, and value vests a strong power in symbols of authority. The hierarchic principle of the order is fulfilled when people willingly submit to it regardless of their place in the hierarchy (ROM 137). Consider the case of anti-suffrage women who vociferously defended their secondary social status.⁷⁸ They were wholly invested in the extant hierarchy, and efforts to change the social order necessarily threatened their sense of self. When one's

⁷⁸ For a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon see Susan E. Marshall, "In Defense of Separate Spheres: Class and Status Politics in the Anti Suffrage Movement," Social Forces 65 (1986).

personal identity is intimately intermingled with particular symbols of authority, efforts to alter them can be seen as an attack on the person herself. Any time that a symbol of authority is tied closely to people's personal identities, social discord and violence are possible. "We thus begin to glimpse the dangerous 'magic' of terministic implications; frequently laden with more and more personal and institutional interests" (Blankenship 134). The symbol(s) becomes an extension of the self and one's preferred value system, which must be protected at all costs. The entelechial push of symbols of authority can be seen in many of the conflicts around the globe. The entelechial push of authoritative symbols does not necessarily end in violence and polarization, but it can increase the force with which one supports or opposes certain valuations.

The contemporary era is rife with sources for symbols of authority, and the increased complexity of daily life that has occurred as a result of globalization and technology—information technology in particular—has created an environment in which valuation is frequently based upon fleeting fragments of information that arise to the top of the massive store of information available. Because of the vast arrays of information, many people seek a way to simplify it in order to place a value judgment on it. Many people do not have the time or the inclination to read comprehensive news stories in major papers and magazines, or they do not have the ability to process the information in a meaningful way, so they turn to some other entity to condense the information for them and in many instances tell them what value they ought to assign it. Consider the basic format of the cable news channels. Much of what is

presented as news is merely an opinion piece being presented as raw data.⁷⁹ As a consequence, we see the phenomenon that *Comedy Central*'s Stephen Colbert labeled as "truthiness." He argues that in today's political environment opinions are presented and largely accepted as facts (Rabin n.p.), and consequently, valuations are constructed from a "virtual" reality as opposed to the extant reality.

When I use the term virtual, I am engaging in an entirely Burkean endeavor. I am metaphorically borrowing the term virtual from the idea of virtual reality, which arose from the efforts of computer scientists to create a virtual world that could be experienced as if it were the extant world. Virtual referred to a representation of the world that was so "real" that one could easily mistake it for reality. While the concept was originally mostly explored in science fiction novels and programming such as *Star Trek: The Next Generation*—where the characters would enter the virtual reality experience to better understand the extant world—progressions in technology have moved the idea of virtual reality into new realms of being. For example, one of the new ways that the military is attempting to treat those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is the use of virtual reality (Schaffer 5). It allows the

⁷⁹ I do not imply that cable news is the only source of the phenomenon that I am outlining, but it serves as an example of how people seek simplification of information and are desirous of letting someone else tell them what the value assessment of the issue ought to be. For a studies that illustrate this phenomenon via an analysis of television news coverage of the war on terror see [Return to Normalcy? How the Media Have Covered the War on Terror: Just the Facts](http://journalism.org/node/286), January 26 2002, Project for Excellence in Journalism, Available: <http://journalism.org/node/286>, July 24 2008. [Return to Normalcy? How the Media Have Covered the War on Terrorism: Difference between News Genres](http://journalism.org/node/286), 2002, Project for Excellence in Journalism, Available: <http://journalism.org/node/286>, July 24 2008. For an analysis of the way in which television news programs narrowly delimit what issues are covered and the way in which the formatting of the programs undermines ability to have fact checking and edited reports see [The State of the News Media: An Annual Report on American Journalism: Cable Tv](http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.com/2008/narrative_cabletv_contentanalysis.php?cat=1&media=7), 2008, Project for Excellence in Journalism, Available: http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.com/2008/narrative_cabletv_contentanalysis.php?cat=1&media=7, July 24 2008.

individual to feel as if he or she is reliving the experiences that triggered the disease in order to learn how to control its consequences. In all situations, the point of virtual reality is to provide a symbolic world that can be engaged in the same manner that the extant can.

For the purposes of this analysis I am metaphorically borrowing the term virtual to describe a situation in which the way events and people are framed and represented has a greater impact on people's valuations than what can be empirically shown to have occurred. This is not to say that all valuations are done virtually, but it suggests that ideology and aesthetic valuation can alter the understanding of the extant in such a way that it is far removed from any notion of facticity. Verbal manipulations have the capacity to transcend the empirical (Burke ROM 84). Word magic, of which virtual valuation is a byproduct, "is not eradicable," (ATH 323) but "the choice here is not a choice between magic and not magic, but a choice between magics that vary in their degree of approximation to the truth" (PLF 7). In part, because people are drawn to a sense of order (LAS 15), virtual valuations can become removed from reality as a perceived symbolic consistency is more important than an incoherent reality. In a chaotic environment, valuation based in ideology can be appealing because it imposes order on an environment that cannot be ordered in the extant. This virtual world of valuation both shapes and is shaped by society's symbols of authority. It is true that to some extent symbols of authority have always been transferred between the extant and the virtual world. Any child who pined to be a lead character in a book has engaged in this process. However, I argue the massive

influx of sources of authority symbols in contemporary America has magnified and accelerated this phenomenon. In order to analyze this issue, I will move my discussion to secondary sources of symbols of authority that move beyond the three rationalizations, and illustrate the way in which virtual assessments have become a significant factor at all levels of society.

Many sources of authoritative symbols are institutional and consequently, provide a long-term foundation for valuation because they represent the bureaucratized values of the social order. These symbols tend to be enduring, and in their normal course of existence, change is slow and frequently imperceptible. Because of their staying power, the symbols emanating from these sources have significant interactions with the symbols derived from the three rationalizations. Two common loci for these are the economic and legal systems, both of which follow their own unique trajectories. At points in history, these trajectories have been conducive to the furtherance of one or more of the rationalizations, while at other points they have been contrary to them. In a number of instances, conflicts between competing rationalizations have been waged using the institutions of the law and the economy. I will now analyze the implications for the legal system, and in chapter nine, I explore issues related to the economic system.

Legal System

Engaging in a Burkean analysis of the Constitution, Meisenhelder argues “the law may be seen as a chart or a set of publicly-shared motives for interpreting actions and situations,” and “as it proliferates, it grows into a set of shared and accepted rules,

a grammar, for the imputation of meanings and motives to our experiences and observations” (48). As such, it is in continual interaction with the rationalizations. The legal system has both shaped and been shaped by religion and science, and it is currently being altered by the information age and its “word magic.” The law itself is the codification of moral precepts (47); it is deemed necessary for the maintenance of the social order to ensure people do not gain personal benefit from breaking the moral code (Burke P&C 186 note 2). This claim in no way undermines the supposition that the legal system is always weighted in some manner; the codified moral code of any given social order is likely to benefit some at the expense of others (Carrier "Knowledge" 55). But, the power of symbols of authority is that they entice all members of society to accept the current system even if it is not in one’s best interest to do so. Carrier (“Knowledge”) explains

First, it provides a bond between the dominant and subordinate groups, as both are portrayed as participating in the hierarchical order grounded on these natural principles. This is what Burke...describes as the pastoral element, consisting of devices for transcending hierarchical differences and defusing class conflict by an inversion and celebration of the hierarchical principles underlying the social order. Burke says the pastoral involves a reversal of values, whereby the subordinate are celebrated for the fitness with which they fulfill their subordinate positions....it provides a nobility for the subordinate by showing that in their subordination to the hierarchical principles they become equal to the powerful in society, who are powerful only because they

too subordinate themselves to those principles. Thus the pastoral provides a kind of unity and ironic equality across social classes, while confirming the subordinate in their subordination and the dominant in their domination.

Second, organizing principles often are used to present to members of the society the view that all, even subordinate members, would be worse off if a different ordering principle, or none at all, were used. Usually this is done by pointing out that the nonarbitrary, proper needs of society are served best if those who best reflect or embody the ordering principles of the hierarchy...are given positions of power. (55-6)

Granted the legal system has built-in means to compel acceptance of the moral order through the use of force and punishment, but social orders that are continued via voluntary submission are easier to maintain. This is not to say that all members of the social order have to acquiesce to the law for it to retain its legitimacy; however, a significant number of people must accept its symbols of authority for this to happen.

The most powerful legal systems are those that can shed with ease those elements that have lost their authority among the public while maintaining the validity of the system itself. Throughout much of American history, legal proscriptions against adultery existed; consequences such as being found at fault in a divorce hearing, while not ending the existence of cheating spouses, did work to keep the act discrete and out of public view. However, the sexual revolution and the loosening grip of religion on the public lessened the degree to which adultery was condemned. Some couples even engaged in it together as swinging became a

phenomenon in the 1970s. While many anti-adultery laws still remain on the books, they no longer have moral force for many, and they are seldom prosecuted.⁸⁰ Hence, the only consequences faced by the cheating spouse are localized to his or her particular situation; the social order itself does little to prevent it from happening. Consider the impeachment proceedings for President Clinton. While the Starr investigation and the subsequent impeachment hearings certainly caused personal anguish for Clinton, he was acquitted in the Senate, and when he left office at the end of his second term he had high approval rating. It was later revealed that the Republican House Majority Leader, Newt Gingrich, was engaging in an extramarital affair with one of his staff members while leading the charge to impeach Clinton.⁸¹ In spite of this, he was still recruited to run for President in the 2008 election.⁸² While many still believe adultery to be morally wrong, the legal system and the broader social order no longer deem it as worthy of societal punishment. Instead, it is a personal failing that needs to be dealt with at an individual level. While some view this shift as undermining the moral basis of America's existence, it illustrates the way in which symbols of authority can fall from favor when people's extant life no longer matches the ideal codified in the legal system.

⁸⁰ Attorney Dirken Winkler notes "In more than 20 states, adultery remains a crime for which one can be prosecuted by the local district attorney. Although few people are prosecuted under those state laws, the laws do remain on the books and occasionally district attorney offices will bring criminal adultery charges against a citizen. Generally, the statutes provide that punishment will be some jail time or a fine. Most cases plead out, however, and the most severe consequence to the "criminal" is the embarrassing publicity." See Dirken D. Winkler, Divorce Faq: Adultery, 2008, Dinkler Law, Available: <http://www.dwinklerlaw.com/CM/Custom/Divorce-FAQ.asp> July 20 2008.

⁸¹ For Gingrich's acknowledgment of his affair and his justification for why it was not hypocritical to impeach Clinton while he himself was engaged in an extra-marital affair see "Gingrich Affair Coincided with Lewinsky Fight," Los Angeles Times March 09 2007.

⁸² Gingrich ultimately decided not to run, but he frequently appears as a pundit on cable news programs to offer his assessment of the political environment.

The interaction between religion and the legal system in the case of abortion illustrates what can happen to symbols of authority when they come into open conflict with each other. Religion has historically influenced the shape of American jurisprudence and its subsequent symbols of authority.⁸³ While much of moral basis of the American legal system can be traced to the Judeo-Christian ethic, the two systems do not always operate in accord with each other. When the Supreme Court decided *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, its landmark ruling on abortion, the pro-life movement was energized and actively worked to undermine the legitimacy of the decision because it contradicted what some believed to be the law of a higher power—abortion is morally wrong and is a sin.⁸⁴ The ramifications of this conflict are significant. In order to dejustify the ruling in *Roe*, the rhetoric of the pro-life movement had to challenge the court as a symbol of authority, and for some the law itself lost its controlling force.⁸⁵ God's law was positioned as higher than the law of the state, and many who wished to end abortion chose to violate the law in their efforts to end it. Abortion clinics have been bombed, workers have been stalked and harassed, and a number of abortion providers and their staff have been shot. Paul Hill, who shot an abortion doctor and his escort in Pensacola, FL in 1994, justified his actions by stating, "The government is unjust because it does not protect human life. To the

⁸³ For a historical analysis of the ramification of biblical precepts have in the legal system see R. H. Helmholz, "The Development of Law in Classical and Early Medieval Europe: The Bible in Service of Canon Law," *Chicago-Kent Law Review* 70 (1995).

⁸⁴ See for example Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*.

⁸⁵ For a detailed explanation of the number and types of criminal activities that have been directed against abortion providers see *Violence Statistics*, June 2008, National Abortion Federation, Available: http://www.prochoice.org/about_abortion/violence/violence_statistics.html, July 24 2008.

extent that we take part in evil, we must answer to God and may God have mercy on us all" (Thomas n.p.).

The conflict between valuations based in particular religious precepts and the application of constitutional principles came into direct and repeated conflict in political and legal discourse, which continues to this day. The entelechial push of the valuation of abortion as contrary to God's law virtually guaranteed this violence would occur as a sense of alienation from the legal system combined with the imbuing fetuses with moral primacy led people to see saving them as the highest priority.⁸⁶ Abortion discourse is an area of the legal system where the conflating of the propositional and hortatorical negatives is easily seen. Efforts to define life as beginning at conception have been undertaken by the pro-life movement. If the fetus is a living human being, then it arguably should have all the rights of other human beings. The use of the propositional negative is being used as a means to justify the hortatorical admonishment of not killing to be applied to the fetus. Hence, by word magic that which is decreed as a human being provides the support for the hortatorical statement that abortion is morally wrong.

The rationalization of science has also had significant interactions with the legal system. In some instances, the conflict, while being mediated in the legal realm, is really between religion and science. From Burkean perspective "the Court, to act, must hierarchize the constitutional wishes, favoring some against others" (Wess 25), and the conflict between the rationalizations necessitates a choice. As discussed

⁸⁶ See for example Lake, "Order and Disorder in Anti-Abortion Rhetoric."

earlier, the famous Scopes Monkey Trial and the more recent intelligent design cases explicitly value science as the preferred method of teaching how the natural world functions in public schools. The rulings in these cases do not deny the possibility of a creator or even the benefits that might be derived from believing in a god. However, they outline what is appropriate given the constitutionally mandated separation of church and state.⁸⁷ In these instances, the courts create order by deciding what types of discourse are appropriate for given situations; they choose a hierarchy of the values. This is one way in which the symbols of authority imbued in the legal system can overshadow the value claims emanating from the rationalizations. The constitution is legally given a higher stature than either religion or science, wherein it can relegate the appropriate venues for the differing types of valuation that are derived from the rationalizations. This example would seem to indicate that the legal system has more power than either religion or science. However, this stance would belie the way both science and religion have shaped legal discourse in America.

Science has had a substantial effect on American jurisprudence and the symbols of authority that emerge from it. On many questions, the rationalization of science has used the legal system as a vessel to propagate itself and the valuations that flow from it. For example, The Innocence Project was created in 1992, in part, to use the tools of science to ensure that our legal system was just, and that only those

⁸⁷ The understanding of separation of church and state has clearly evolved since its inception. For example, prayer in school was once typical. While the first amendment has not been altered (the words are still the same), its application and our understanding of it has changed. Burke's theory explains that "the contextual exigencies, the Constitution-behind-the-Constitution" and "different circumstances may call for a different distribution of influences among various principles" Virginia Anderson, "Antithetical Ethics: Kenneth Burke and the Constitution," JAC: Journal of Composition Theory 15.2 (1995). p. 266.

who are truly guilty are punished. By using scientific procedures, such as DNA profiling, not available at the time of conviction, the project tested the guilty verdicts handed down by numerous juries, and in a number of instances found the incarcerated to be innocent of the crimes for which they had been convicted. These scientifically based exonerations illuminate significant problems with how juries are persuaded to believe a defendant is guilty or innocent. As scientific study has advanced, it has surpassed previous ways in which guilt was proved in a court of law. From fingerprints to DNA, science has consistently altered the way in which truth claims are evaluated in a court of law. Eye witness testimony, which was at one time the gold standard for evidence in a criminal case, has been delimited by studies that show it to be highly unreliable under many circumstances (Fruzzetti et al 18). Even though the legal system can control scientific discourse in some ways, science has shaped our criminal justice system in innumerable ways.

In contemporary America, another force is also in play. The representations of the legal system in a variety of media have affected how people understand what the legal system is, how it operates, and what it should be. It could be argued that representations of the legal system have always existed. This is an unarguably true statement; from Plato's rendering of the trial of Socrates to Shakespeare's Portia to Perry Mason, the legal system has since its inception become part of the popular parlance of the social order. Because of the prominent role law plays in valuation, it has always been a significant subject in human artistic and intellectual expression. Nonetheless, the sheer magnitude of representations and the blending together of

fiction and fantasy allowed for by technology have facilitated an environment conducive to a shift in valuation of the legal system and its constitutive parts.

Mass media technologies, such as cable television and the internet, have allowed for the flow of information to accelerate at amazing levels. People are constantly bombarded by information in a variety of forms. Some of it is largely informational, which might appear in varying stages of completeness. By this, I mean information that is not intentionally being used persuasively—raw data. Nonetheless, most of the information is rhetorical in nature, and it is becoming increasingly difficult to differentiate between what is factual and what is fictional, which eases the transference of standards of valuation between the aesthetic and the ethical. Consequently, Burke's theory suggests that representations of reality are having greater sway on people's valuations, and in some instances, the ideal legal system is conflated with the actual legal system. When this happens, valuations are based upon the virtual legal system instead of the extant.

Consider the various types of legal programming available on cable television. It runs the gamut from wildly popular fictional dramas such as Law & Order and CSI, which draw many of their story lines from current events, to shows such as A & E's Cold Case Files, wherein real cases are detailed with interviews of actual participants, and actual crime scene photos are interspersed with dramatic re-enactments of crime, to Court TV, which shows footage from actual trials as they occur commingled with analysis from pundits. This blurring of fiction and reality as it relates to legal questions is already having an effect on how people actually understand legal issues.

Many prosecutors argue that they have to present forensic evidence at trials even if it does not serve an argumentative function for the prosecution because the juries expect it, and studies suggest that the aforementioned shows are changing the ways in which juries understand the legal arguments presented at trial (Tibbetts A12). On a bigger scale, the military recently asked the producers of the television show 24,⁸⁸ in which the lead character frequently engages in torture to prevent terrorist attacks, to scale back its representations of torture because United States' soldiers in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan were basing their understandings of the legal and pragmatic efficacy of torture based on its positive representation in the television show. The propositional negative of science is being replaced by the propositional negative of the aesthetic; that which is and is not is increasingly being determined by word magic that is demonstrably removed from facticity by the influence of fictional television programming. Hence, even in a social realm wherein strict rules of evidence exist, the representation of what occurred can be as significant as what actually can be proven to have occurred.

As can be seen by this analysis, word magic has taken on an increasingly important role in contemporary society. The legal system is the embodiment of a social order's values, and the conflicts that are waged in this realm are illustrative of competing value systems and the symbols of authority that correspond with them. As such, it is a venue in which competing factions will do battle over what the values of the order ought to be. Because the legal system is reliant upon dialectical terms, the

⁸⁸ For an explanation of the Pentagon's reasoning see Owen Moritz, "Defense Bigs Ask "24" To Cool It on Torture," Daily News February 10 2007.

decisions that emanate from it necessarily exist in the realm of word magic, and the valuations that flow from it are dependent upon the ability of word magic to imbue them with legitimacy. As such the legal system itself has potential to become descendant if the conflicts that occur within the legal system lead to a delegitimization of the system itself. The law, however, is not the only realm in which word magic has taken on increased import. A second area of concern is the economic system, which I discuss in the following chapter.

Chapter 9: Pop Culture, Identification, and the Commodification of Values

A second institution that Burke outlines as being a source of symbols of authority is the economy. His early writings were strongly influenced by his readings of Marx. However, his examination of the role that the economic system plays in questions of valuation is sparse, and he mostly focuses on the way in which the work that one does affects one's system of values. He acknowledges that the work we do both reflects and shapes our interests (P&C 240), but at times one's work may be in direct conflict with a person's personal moral code (ROM 31). America is grappling with this issue as the rights of individuals come into conflict with each other. Plan B, the so called morning after pill, exemplifies this difficulty. Some pharmacists believe that the pill is a potential abortifacient, and refuse to dispense it. State governments have been struggling with how to deal with this issue, and various laws have been passed that have attempted to balance the competing rights of the worker and the patient.⁸⁹ In a rapidly globalizing society, these sorts of personal conflicts are likely to emerge more frequently.

Burke was correct that the work people do has an effect on how we evaluate the broader world around us. However, in contemporary America our economic system plays a more pronounced role in shaping societal values. Much of our current economy is based in the realm of information and representation. From movies, television, songs, the internet, video games, sporting events and all of the secondary industries that surround the aforementioned, our economy creates and disseminates

⁸⁹ For further detail about this controversy see Rob Stein, "Plan B Use Surges, and So Does Controversy," The Washington Post July 13 2007.

value laden products at an amazing speed. This coupled with easy access to the products, and an apparent desire to escape the extant with the ideal ensures that our economic system is playing an ever greater role in shaping individual and social valuations.⁹⁰ In 1982, Kimberling argues that “popular art helps socialize its audiences into a common culture by providing a set of conventional responses which carry stock symbolic meaning” (30). Cheseboro, who conducted a study of primetime television programming from 1974-1991, notes that “producers of these series freely admit that persuasive intents guide the development and execution of the entertainment they provide,” as they “intentionally formulate and portray certain values as more desirable than others” in order to “reinforce certain value judgments but not others” (“Values and Popular Television” 198).

Cheseboro’s study also notes that the values expressed are not consistent over time; instead, the values presented were altered across time (218-19). This trend is likely to accelerate as the technological capacity to rapidly create and disseminate new programming and images has grown exponentially. This combined with an economic incentive to continually develop something “new” increases the likely rapidity with which new values are presented for consumption. In consumer based capitalism, it is necessary for people to continually want new products and services to replace the old if the economy is going to continue expanding (Featherstone 6). As such, the entelechial push of the economic system is one that relies on the fluidity of values. If we continue to like what we currently have, we do not have a need to buy a

⁹⁰ I do not mean to downplay the effects that traditional art forms such as literature and plays have had on shaping people’s value system. However, contemporary society is distinct from other historical eras in that virtually everyone has access to some or all forms of popular culture.

new product to replace it. One area in which this is particularly true is popular culture, which is significant because it is a common source for understanding the extant world.

Popular culture plays a significant role in how we understand values, and I argue that it does this in three distinct ways.⁹¹ The first is the acceptance and/or imitation of the values presented; the second is through their rejection, and the third is through the responses that others in society have to the implicit valuations. In the first, popular culture has a direct influence in shaping how one understands the world and what the appropriate responses to extant circumstances should be. This can be as a direct result of engaging it, or because others in one's social environment have accepted it and one is compelled to follow along. In the second, one's identity is developed in opposition to the values presented, and in the third, the conflict that emerges in response to the popular culture is what shapes one's value structure.

From Tipper Gore's efforts to put parental advisory labels on music in the 1980s to the FCC's efforts to control the content that appears on cable television to the burning of books that are viewed as subversive, American society has long been concerned with the practical effects of popular culture on societal values. Those who support the regulations and censorship argue that mere exposure to certain ideas and words is inherently harmful to one's value system; those who oppose regulations argue that if one's value system is sufficiently grounded the mere exposure to new ideas is harmless because the viewer understands that it is a fictional account.

⁹¹ I am not arguing that these three routes are mutually exclusive. It is probably a combination of all of the factors and how they interact with other elements that are also occurring in one's life. For the purpose of analysis, I will treat them as distinct categories to better flesh out how they function.

Burke's theories suggest that it is not a simple either/or situation, but instead it is a both/and, wherein the artistic expression has the capacity to effect both positively and/or negatively.

The critical questions are "What values are derived from the work itself?", and "How does the artifact value extant symbols of authority?". It is difficult to prove a direct causal connection between popular culture and changing valuations because of the number of variables involved—competing value representations are presented in popular culture, which then interact with other sources of values such as one's family, community, and geographical location. Nonetheless, Burke's theories suggest that popular culture plays an important role in revaluation because it alters the environment from which values are learned; it is the "scenic backdrop" of our value formation (Kimberling 51). Value systems and the choices that are derived from them are not static; they are continually emerging as new information and changing circumstances are accounted for. While an individual's core values may not outwardly appear to change because of popular culture, it is naive to believe that it has no effect.

Much of Burke's discussion of art focuses on its libratory possibility; he views it as serving a potential corrective to societal or individual malaise (CS 110-11). However, art can also have negative effects when it supports a system of values that is destructive to the individual or society. When one considers art writ large to include all forms of popular culture, the implications for value systems are enormous as symbols of authority are derived from both the actual and the imagined. For

example, brokerage firm TD Waterhouse relies on this phenomenon in their commercials that star actors Steven Hill and Sam Waterston. The former played *Law & Orders*,⁹² first district attorney, Adam Schiff, while the latter played ADA Jack McCoy. In the commercials each appears as they do in the television program while they tout the benefits of using the company for investment assistance. The ethos of the characters is symbolically transferred to the actors, who in turn transfer it to the company. While neither is a legitimate authority on investment advice, the transference of the valuation of them from the artistic to the extant is a powerful rhetorical device, which allows viewers to identify with the characters' personas as if they were actual people.

Identification and Imitation

The process of identification is central to understanding valuation; "it is the personal variant of the more general concept of orientation" (Branaman 446). As such, it requires a person to make value assessments because it necessitates division and classification (Burke ROM 22), which requires judgment. The individual in his "quest for identity identifies in a symbolic fashion of making choices" as "the self seeks identity through acceptance and rejection of various symbols with which it is confronted" (Ambrester 206). Identification is what allows for "congregation by segregation" as it forces one to choose among competing values and their adherents (Burke ROM 34). If one identifies strongly as a Republican, he cannot also identify as a Democrat. Identification requires choosing a side. In contemporary America,

⁹² Law and Order is a long-running legal drama that first aired on television in 1990, and it is still in production at the time of this writing.

this act, however, is fraught with difficulty because sources of symbols of authority are increasingly unstable, which makes it harder to feel connected to self and society, and one's identity may become fractured as disjunctive allegiances come into conflict.

I believe popular culture has a significant impact over individual and social values in the contemporary era because of the transference of symbols of authority between the realm of aesthetics and entertainment to that of people's lived experiences. People identify with and imitate those who possess social significance because they hope the import will be transferred to them and increase their own social standing. Burke notes improvements in one's social location is a form of transcendence (Kenneth Burke ROM 193), and the movement between the two realms allows the individual to virtually transcend the circumstances of their lives. For Burke, imitation is a form of identification, wherein people can "imitate one another's actions as revealed on the surface, or subtly imitate the *underlying principles* of such action" (ROM 131).⁹³ Hence, identification with pop culture icons has the potential to transfer the implicit valuations inherent in the public image of the stars to people's extant existence.

This phenomenon is magnified by the drive of the economic system that not only continues pushing the envelope of what is considered socially acceptable, while at the same time flooding society with increased exposure to the stars and their "bad" behavior. Think about the ongoing saga of singer Britney Spears; the media exposes

⁹³ Italics in the original.

society to the most intimate details of her life, which includes drug and alcohol problems, marital and parenting difficulties, and for those who desire, pictures of her bare vagina from when she decided underwear were optional when wearing short skirts.⁹⁴ Competition among media sources and the celebrities themselves virtually guarantees that the drama will be unending. While if true competition existed, the aggregate effect on valuation would not be as significant, i.e. if the competition focused on finding something new or different. However, the competition seems to revolve around who can out-do the other doing the same general thing. Burke recognizes this phenomenon and argues that “from the standpoint of ‘identification’ what we call ‘competition’ is better described as men’s attempt to out-imitate one another” (ROM 131). When Burke wrote this, he was describing businesspersons who competed ever so hard to own the same insignia representing social status that others might possess. In contemporary popular culture, the competition through identification is still strong; however, the competition is to now sell an image that is imbued with a plethora of valuations.

Many pop culture icons resist the idea that they are role models and have a responsibility to broader society. Charles Barkley, a former NBA player who has a bad boy image, clearly expressed this view point when he said

⁹⁴ Britney Spears as a phenomenon is estimated to add \$120 million to the economy, which includes the paparazzi and the public consumption of her life. For a detailed description see ABC News, Magazine Estimates Britney Spears Is Worth \$120 Million to the Economy January 25 2008, Available: <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/Business/story?id=4190748&page=1>, June 15 2008. For a fuller description of her personal problems that frequently make the news see Shan Ross, "Judge Rules Britney Must Give up Her Children," The Scotsman October 2 2007.

I don't believe professional athletes should be role models. I believe parents should be role models.... It's not like it was when I was growing up. My mom and my grandmother told me how it was going to be. If I didn't like it, they said, 'Don't let the door hit you in the ass on your way out.' Parents have to take better control. (Barkley n.p.)

While increased parental involvement in teaching values might very well be beneficial, this assessment assumes that parents have the ability to control with whom and what their children identify. But identification can “operate without conscious direction by any particular agent” (Burke ROM 35). A person may look at an athlete and respect their ability and wish they could do the same thing. Even this small level of identification opens the door for identification with other elements of the star's persona. Simply because talent is what one initially identifies with does not mean that identification will stop at that point. Identification with extrinsic factors frequently occurs (27), and if those factors are harmful to society and/or the individual, then “bad” identification has happened (ATH 267).

The depiction of violence in popular culture is an area where a risk of bad identification is possible. Myriad researchers have attempted to determine if a causal connection can be drawn between visual depictions of violence on television and the movies and actual violence. While this is an extremely important question, it is beyond the purview of this work. I will, instead, discuss the way in which violence is valued in its symbolic representations, and how this can lead to symbolic slippage between fictional and real-life value judgments. While violence has always been a

part of American popular culture, its current depictions are largely removed from a moral framework that indicate under what circumstances violence is an acceptable behavior. While a moral calculus is still present in some representations, some of the greatest purveyors of violence have stripped all questions of morality, beyond the simple might makes right, from it.

The FCC is the governmental agency charged with determining what is considered acceptable depictions of both sex and violence on the public air waves. While it has been quite active in fining networks that allow even accidental sexual content such as the word “fuck” uttered during a live broadcast, or the infamous Janet Jackson Super Bowl fiasco wherein singer Justin Timberlake accidentally exposed part of Jackson’s breast during the halftime performance of the 2004 Superbowl,⁹⁵ it has been less diligent in its oversight of depictions of violence. The amount of graphic violence shown on television has increased dramatically during the last twenty years.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ The participants argued that the exposure was accidental because only Jackson’s shirt was meant to be ripped and not her lingerie as well. While the FCC imposed the maximum fine for the incident, the court overturned the fine in 2008. For further detail see Joann Loviglio, Court Tosses Fcc ‘Wardrobe Malfunction’ Fine, July 21 2008, Yahoo! News, Available: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080721/ap_en_tv/cbs_janet_jackson, July 22 2008.

⁹⁶ I was struck by how much violence is shown on television in today’s market while watching Quincy, M.E. (original air date 1976-1983) in syndication and how mild it is in comparison to today’s trilogy of CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) and its spin-offs CSI: Miami and CSI: New York. With Quincy, in spite of the title character’s job as a medical examiner, the viewer seldom sees a graphic depiction of an autopsy. While the morgue and bodies are shown, one seldom saw the inside of the body or gruesome wounds. In contrast, on CSI the viewer is frequently confronted with exceptionally bloody crime scenes and is shown the removal of bodily organs. While this may seem trivial to some, consider what changes had to be undertaken for this to occur. The public had to be willing to view the gore; the writers had to be able to envision it; the network had to be willing to air it, and advertisers needed to believe that their products would not be negatively affected by the gruesome content surrounding their advertisements. The fact that CSI was able to be produced, aired, become wildly popular and support two spin-offs illustrates how accepting the public has become of gruesome

While it is difficult to prove a causal connection between media violence and real violence, the previous analyses of the easy slippage between aesthetic and ethical valuation suggests that while depictions of violence may not lead directly to violent behavior, it has the potential to affect our value judgments about violent behaviors. The television show 24⁹⁷ is a case in point. Its lead character, Jack Bauer, is repeatedly depicted committing horrific acts of torture in order to stop terrorist threats. Of course, in the television show, torture always works to stop the ticking bomb; however, in the real world it is not that simple. Torture seldom provides useful information, and it dehumanizes both those who torture and those who are tortured.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the army found it incumbent to ask the producers to tone down the representations of torture because they believed it was influencing how American soldiers fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan understood torture. The value judgment assessed of torturous acts was seemingly altered, in part, by the way in which it was depicted on television.

Stripping valuations from the appropriate context occurs frequently in American popular culture. The rise of the anti-hero in TV, film and videogames portends an uncomfortable answer to the question of who can become a symbol of authority. The anti-hero is meant to be a protagonist that is severely flawed, but is

depictions of violence. Consumers not only accept it, they also expect it. Watching an episode of Quincy is quaint in comparison.

⁹⁷ 24 first aired in November 2001.

⁹⁸ For an explanation of this position see a letter written by 43 retired Generals and Admirals and sent to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in support of requiring the CIA to follow the standards set forth in the Army Field Manual. Letter to Select Committee on Intelligence, February 12 2008, Human Rights First, Available: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.info/pdf/08228-etn-military-leaders-senate-cia.pdf>, July 22 2008.

deemed worthy nonetheless. The movie First Blood that came out in the 1980s is an example of the sometimes tricky assessment of what behaviors are acceptable or even heroic under certain circumstances. The lead character, Rambo, is a Vietnam veteran who has been mistreated by the military, which gives his law breaking antics an aura of heroism and legitimacy. While First Blood provides a reason why the anti-hero could be a genuine hero, many current depictions of violent, anti-social behaviors no longer contain the same complexity that allows one to see both the good and the bad of a person at the same time. Consider the wildly popular video game Grand Theft Auto, which has numerous editions.⁹⁹ In the game one takes on the role of a gangster of some sort who must complete a number of illegal tasks in order to advance. A player might undergo a mission to steal cars, shoot enemies, pimp out prostitutes, or various other illegal activities. The better a criminal a player is, the further he will go in the game. While players have to complete certain missions, they are free to engage in other activities, such as shooting police who attempt to apprehend them or having sex with a prostitute. Of course, the player can choose to kill the prostitute after having sex with her in order to not have to pay for the services. In the game, a complete transvaluation of American values occurs virtually as the player reverses the accepted societal frame. Burke notes that law and order is as much about hierarchy as it is regulation (ROM 264), and the player reverses the social order by making excellence in criminality the new symbol of authority.

⁹⁹ To illustrate the popularity of this game, its fourth edition raked in \$500 million in sales during its first week on the market. For more detail see Bloomberg News, "Grand Theft Auto Sales Top \$500 Million " International Herald Tribune May 7 2008.

While not everyone will ultimately identify with and attempt to imitate acts of violence they encounter in popular culture, Burke's theories suggest the ubiquity of the images and their infiltration in almost every conceivable venue makes it probable that some will. At a minimum, the representations enter into the cultural texture from which values emerge. Desensitization to violence is likely in the broader public, and it makes it more likely that people might value acts of actual violence differently. When the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal first came to public light, the reactions from some illustrated the debasement of the American value system as it pertained to torture. Commentator Rush Limbaugh proclaimed loudly that what happened at the prison complex was not torture; he went so far as to say that what the pictures depicted was no worse than standard fraternity hazing was.¹⁰⁰ United States' Representative Dana Rohrabacher from California used the same argument during a Congressional debate about the treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay.¹⁰¹ While pictures of naked human pyramids can be amusing and non-threatening in some circumstances, Limbaugh and Rohrabacher's assessments stripped the images from their context and placed them in a benign setting. In his discussion of occupational psychoses, Burke details the ease with which valuations from one field are transferred into another (ROM 133), which is what Limbaugh and Rohrabacher were guilty of. In a fraternity house, the pledges understand that they are being humiliated for a reason—to increase group cohesion. They *voluntarily* agree to engage in the

¹⁰⁰ For a more detailed account of Limbaugh's comments see Media Matters, Limbaugh on Torture of Iraqis: U.S. Guards "Having a Good Time," "Blow[Ing] Some Steam Off", May 5 2004, Available: <http://mediamatters.org/items/200405050003>, July 21 2008.

¹⁰¹ For a description of Rohrabacher's speech see Lara Jakes Jordan, "Lawmaker Gets to the Bottom of Panties Torture," The Guardian June 5 2008.

prescribed acts. At the prison, however, the individuals *were forced* to engage in the acts photographed. Violence is an implicit part of the context. They had no *free choice* to refuse the commands given them. The ease by which some accepted Limbaugh and Rohrabacher's assessments illustrates the move of valuation from the extant to the virtual. In the real world, prisoners of war do not get naked and pile on top of each other for the fun of it while soldiers photograph them, but in the virtual world, it is plausible that soldiers did not force them on top of each other. When an action is stripped from its context, the valuation of it operates in the realm of the virtual as the evaluator bases judgment in the ideal and not in the extant. It is in this way that violent representations can emerge as a social force even when they do not lead an individual to commit acts of violence. It makes it easier to accept violence and deem it not that bad, as the individual identifies with and positively values the violent acts.

Commodification of Values

In addition to identification and imitation, a second way in which the economic system implicates valuation is through the commodification of values. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke briefly touches on the notion of a "cult of commodities" (192). He implies that the cultish devotion that many Americans have toward the acquisition of goods can be seen as "a mode of transcendence that is genuine, but inferior" (192). This suggests that people seek out sociality by their ability to consume. While this allows connection with others, it is a warped connection. This concern is magnified in the information age as images and ideals

have become commodities, which can be bought and sold. This creates a situation in which values are no longer simply ideals that provide order and meaning to one's existence; instead, values become "commodities" that can be used to sell oneself or one's ideas or products. The incentive to be famous and to make money is deemed by much mass culture to be more important than the means by which one gains access to fame and fortune. As a consequence, values do not have intrinsic worth; instead, it is how the expression of values is packaged to be sold to an audience that is of consequence. Star Muir illustrates the problem when this cult of commodities becomes entrenched within a social order.

The problem with the cult of commodities is the essential imbalance it builds into society. The problem is precisely that these forces become "cultish," and extreme. At an individual level, the monetary motive is an alienating one since it recasts individual worth and the attainment of goals in quantitative terms. Money and economic habits are "measurable," in the most direct way, and they therefore infuse thinking about social relations. (21)

While not everyone in America "buys" into this "cult" as it relates to values, the entertainment industry is busy churning out commodified values. To further explain this argument, I examine the way the marketing of one's persona affects the representations of one's values. I will use two contemporary stars—Jessica Simpson and Paris Hilton—as examples of this.

Both Simpson and Hilton are examples of celebrities who have capitalized on making their personal lives available for public consumption in a way that has

allowed their persons to become a commodity. While their circumstances differ, in both cases their personal lives have been the source of their fame. Simpson is a singer and actress who is the daughter of a Baptist youth minister. While in high school she signed a virginity pledge, and publicly stated her goal to remain a virgin until she married.¹⁰² While she was apparently successful at maintaining her purity until she married her now ex-husband, Nick Lachey, her public actions belie the commitment to marriage that undergird her original abstinence pledge, and illustrate the way in which her personal values were commodified. She and Lachey starred in MTV's reality show, Newlyweds, which aired the most intimate moments of their first year of marriage for the world to see.¹⁰³ Marriages are difficult to maintain even under the best of circumstances, and it seems having one's home invaded by cameras and directors for the first year of marriage would put an incredible strain upon it. Not surprisingly, after three years the couple filed for divorce. In effect, Simpson and Lachey packaged their marriage, topped it with a bow and sold it to the American public for their consumption. The monetary value of the marriage as a commodity superseded the sacred value of the marriage in spite of the preservation of Simpson's virginity and her stated public views of marriage as a sacred institution.¹⁰⁴ However, her career was launched, and she has a public persona that relies heavily on a

¹⁰² For a description of the incongruity of her virginity pledge and the way in which she sexualized her public performances see Cathrin Schaer, The New Trend of Virginity, January 20 2001, nzherald.co.nz, Available: <http://www.entertainmentwise.com/news/27444/paris-hilton-in-racist-video-storm>, July 22 2008.

¹⁰³ The show ran from August 2003-May 2005.

¹⁰⁴ According to Wikipedia, Simpson purportedly agreed to do the show to provide publicity for a newly released album. The show is widely credited with propelling her to stardom. See for example her biography at <http://www.jessicasimpsonnet.com/biography/>.

sexualized representation of her body. Over a few short years, her public image has moved from one of a virginal Christian to a star who is dependent upon the public consumption of her sexuality to maintain her career. Her image operates in a repudiation of her previously expressed values.

In the second example, Paris Hilton, an heiress to the Hilton hotel fortune, has engaged in a career that is based almost exclusively on being famous for being famous. She has shown no discernable talent except to make money by exposing her personal life to the public. She has functionally commodified the entirety of her existence in order to become even richer than she already was. She is paid to attend parties in Hollywood,¹⁰⁵ and she has been involved in a number of infamous events that by many people's accounts would show a lack of morality. A sex tape involving herself and her ex-boyfriend was distributed on the internet;¹⁰⁶ she and her sister Nicole were caught on video, which was posted to YouTube, using a racial epithet;¹⁰⁷ she has had a number of arrests for driving under the influence, which ultimately resulted in her spending time in jail.¹⁰⁸ The paparazzi ensured that her court appearances and her subsequent internment and release from jail were visible for the

¹⁰⁵ Hilton was offered \$200,000 to celebrate her 24th birthday at Pure. For more details see Rigel Gregg, Paris Hilton Paid \$200,000 to Party on Her Birthday, September 1 2007, Luxist, Available: <http://www.luxist.com/2007/09/01/paris-hilton-paid-200-000-to-party-on-her-birthday/>, July 22 2008.

¹⁰⁶ While this occurrence was a result of actions on the part of her ex-boyfriend, Hilton strategically used the episode to further garner attention to herself and hence increase the marketability of herself as a "bad" girl. To illustrate the exposure this has given Hilton, a Google search with the terms "Paris Hilton Sex Tape" resulted in over 3.4 million hits.

¹⁰⁷ For a more detailed description on the video see Paris Hilton in Racist Video Storm, February 1 2007, EntertainmentWise, Available: <http://www.entertainmentwise.com/news/27444/paris-hilton-in-racist-video-storm>, July 22 2008.

¹⁰⁸ After Hilton was released from jail she appeared on Larry King Live to recount the experience to her viewing audience. For a description of the appearance see Ray Richmond, We're All Paying Dearly for This Trip to Paris, June 28 2007, Past Deadline, Available: http://www.pastdeadline.com/paris_hilton/index.html, July 22 2008.

world to see. While it is difficult to determine what Hilton's actual values are, she has made a small fortune by representing herself as a craven and valueless woman. She has used her fame from these events to further her economic advantage by engaging in business ventures; one of which is the Paris Hilton fashion line, which makes it easier for those who identify with her to act like the star they aspire to be. The satirical television show, South Park, highlighted potential problems with this phenomenon in the episode "Stupid Spoiled Whores." This episode uses Hilton's persona to interrogate why parents are willing to dress their young daughters in Paris' clothing line, which symbolically sexualizes the girls. The implication of the episode is that if parents encourage their daughters to emulate a spoiled, drunken, promiscuous and vacuous woman, their daughters are likely to grow up to be spoiled, drunken, promiscuous and vacuous women. Burke would concur with the possibility and perhaps, the probability of this occurring. The Paris Hilton phenomenon represents the cult of commodification. Her fame and fortune are more important than the values that she represents.

The "bad" behaviors are now encouraged, and the selling of a commodity is more important than the underlying values being expressed. The violation of social values has become a fetish. This phenomenon is magnified by the rapidity with which new programs emerge using the same general form but pushing the inversion of the values even further and by the ubiquity of pop culture stars and their antics. The economics of the entertainment industry virtually guarantee that stars and the package of values with which they are imbued must be constantly changed, which

makes it more difficult to have any sort of consistent identification. While identification should lead to transcendence, it can lead to the “empty acquisition of verbal paraphernalia” (Burke ROM 337), and I believe this is common in contemporary America. Historically, Burke notes that authority symbols are stable and difficult to change (ATH 226, 331-5) because the strength of the allegiance to them as well as the ability of casuistic stretching to alleviate the dissonance caused by inconsistencies in the social order (230). However, when circumstances undermine authority symbols, there is always an interregnum in which rapid shifts in valuation can and do occur (216). I believe the current era to be constantly in this state of flux because the rapidity with which the economic system pushes for change. The pop culture icon is a commodity that is to be sold and consumed and then replaced by a newer and “better” model, and the whiplash effect can be traumatic to the stability of values. Consequently, individuals can become alienated from the social system when symbols of authority are discarded like yesterdays trash. In the following chapter, I will further examine the process of alienation.

Chapter 10: Alienation

One of the means by which social orders and personal identities are maintained is through casuistic stretching. The lens through which one views the world is continually altered by new experiences, and the changes normally occur in gradations that are imperceptible, which allows for alterations to one's system of values while maintaining the appearance of their continuity (Burke P&C 142). However, efforts at casuistry cannot always resolve the dissonance that occurs when societal values no longer adequately account for individual circumstance. As values are bureaucratized by institutions, unwanted byproducts will likely emerge (ATH 252), which can make it more difficult for people to feel as if they belong to the social order. It is "through shared perspectives" that "people identify and develop a common view needed for social cooperation" (Kelley 323), and when identifications begin to dissociate, the symbolic trappings of transcendent beliefs can begin to disintegrate. When being optimistic, Burke argued that one should view the act of dissociation as a cleansing period—a time to remove those elements of the belief system that are no longer functional for the individual or social order (ROM 153). However, cleansing does not guarantee that only the bad will be eliminated from a frame; it can cause a rejection of the entire value system, even if many parts of it have a positive impact on people's lives (ATH 222). Instability necessarily exists when transitions between frames occur because a revaluation of values is occurring (216). When the foundational aspects of a population's identity are called into question, the social order can become factionalized. It is at this point that alienation can occur

because the broader system of symbols of authority has been undermined, and the individual no longer feels as if he is connected to the social order (216, 341-44).¹⁰⁹

In this section, I will explore the phenomenon of alienation as it relates to dissociation from society and dissociation from one's physical self.

To begin, I will outline Burke's conception of alienation. Burke borrows the term metaphorically "from Marx, who borrowed it from Hegel, who borrowed it from Diderot" (ATH 216). He uses the terminology in a similar sense as these earlier theorists, but as with all of Burke's borrowing of terminology, he places his own meaning upon it. When he discusses alienation, he refers to a sense of disconnect with the social order in which one resides. He clarifies that "a good synonym for our purposes is 'estrangement'" (216). It is "that state of affairs wherein a man no longer 'owns' his world because...it seems *basically unreasonable*" (216). As Burke notes alienation can be both material and spiritual (216-17), and one can be both connected and alienated at the same time. For example, one could be materially well off and own the insignia of society's symbols of authority, but at the same time not feel as if one fits into the broader social group. A person is materially alienated when he does not have access to the "'goods' which his society has decreed as 'normal'" (216), i.e. when an individual does not have access to the insignia of the symbols of authority of the social order. On the other hand, a person is spiritually alienated when "this deprivation leads him to distrust the rationale of purposes by which he is deprived"

¹⁰⁹ An individual can feel alienated from a broader culture even if the society is not factionalized. However, when widespread segments of the population feel alienated it usually signifies a society that is in a transitional frame where there is disagreement about the order's symbols of authority and who has access to them.

(216). At its core, this is a question of being invested in the value system of the order and feeling secure in one's social location. For this state to occur people must feel connected with others in the society. Because the identification that lets this occur is never complete, and identification also necessitates division a certain level of alienation will always exist. "We are, in various ways, divided, alienated—from nature, from each other, from other cultures, even from ourselves" (Coe "Defining Rhetoric" 48).

As I have previously argued, the implications that communication technology has on the fluidity of values is enormous. The economic system is continually pushing new "products" that can alter the scenic background in which all valuations occur, and the commodification of values provides an economic incentive to push different and frequently contradictory valuations. This fluidity of values in society increases the opportunities for alienation to emerge on the individual level as people's sense of identity may have greater difficulty keeping up with and accounting for the new valuations being presented for consumption, which may make it more difficult for people to feel and retain a sense of connection to the broader social order, and alienation is a probable outcome.

In times of stability, authority symbols have the appearance of being steady and foundational because the rate of change is slow, and people's casuistic efforts are able to maintain coherence for them. In times of transition, however, values are called into question and authoritative symbols lose their sheen. Current communication technologies provide the means for the transformation of these

symbols, and the economic system is vested in altering the insignia that marks the symbols of authority, which can magnify the appearance of a weakening value system. Hence, alienation is likely to exist across social strata as it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to find foundational values that allow them to connect with large segments of society, and pronounced factionalism can emerge along a multiplicity of fissures such as race, religion, and political affiliation. When a commonality of values does not exist, factions within the order can turn on each other in order to push their value system to a position of dominance, further undermining a sense of community among the factions.

According to Burke, one source of alienation is the rhetorical act of debunking, which is a process of transcendence downward (ATH 92-3). As a literary device it refers to efforts to deflate reputations or to demythologize social myths such as proving Washington did not chop down a cherry tree (PLF 145). As a rhetorical strategy in the social and political world, however, it seldom functions to merely set the record straight. Instead, it tends to rely upon creating caricatures of people, ideas and actions that destroy the good aspects along with the bad (ATH 74). When the values of a social order are debunked, alienation is likely to occur because values provide a sense of connection to the larger order, and when they are delegitimized, the likelihood of disassociation from others is increased.

The risk of alienation in a democratic society is always present because of the nature of “factional debunking” that can occur (Burke ATH 77). In an effort to destroy the other party’s candidates and positions, the devaluation of common values

can ensue. Consider, for example, the efforts that have been made to undermine court rulings that have purportedly expanded rights beyond the “strict wording” of the constitution. Labeling judges as “activists” and as opposed to the Constitution can undermine the legitimacy of the courts¹¹⁰ and Burke’s theory suggests that the delegitimizing the court’s actions makes it easier for people to disregard *all* court rulings and not just the ones that are controversial. Alienation from the values of a social order can increase the sense that one is not bound by the rules that emanate from those values. While I cannot make a strict causal connection between the rhetorical debunking of the judiciary and violent acts against judges, their families and court workers, Burke’s conception of entelechy suggests that it is a possible outcome of a rhetorical strategy that undermines the moral legitimacy of the judiciary. A United States Federal Judge indicates that “in federal courts it [violence] is more likely to come from litigants representing themselves, particularly those who have fired their lawyers, in emotion-laden cases alleging violations of civil rights or injuries to self-image, cases that deeply involve notions of personal worth.” (Kane 15). While he does not explicitly tie alienation to the violence, his rhetoric suggests that it is connected. The individuals feel as if the judicial system has ignored their rights, and the values of the court are contrary to what they perceive the values ought

¹¹⁰ A 2007 gallup poll indicated that only 34% have confidence in the Supreme Court. This number is the lowest level of confidence reported since the question first started being asked in 1973, and it is only the second time the number has dipped below 40%. For more details about this poll see Benjamin Wittes, The Supreme Court’s Looming Legitimacy Crisis, June 25 2007, Brookings Institute, Available: http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2007/0625governance_wittes.aspx, July 23 2008.

to be. The judges, in the rhetoric and belief of some,¹¹¹ have become enemies of the state and the individual as opposed to civil servants who are doing their best to balance the rights of all people within the social order; responding violently is a possible entelechial outcome of rhetorically positioning judges as the embodiment of that which is wrong with society. The individual judge is dehumanized through characterizations that remove her humanity and turn her into a symbolic representation of the value system being rejected. As such, the ““desire to kill”” is better understood “as a desire to *transform the principle* which that person *represents*” (Burke ROM 13). This sort of debunking strategy creates a narrow prism through which all actions are evaluated, which necessarily elides much of the complexity of the situation (PLF 152), and it makes it increasingly difficult for social relations to develop in which individuals see each other as part of the same community based upon shared values (ATH 106).

The above understanding of violence helps to explain actions that seem intuitively counterproductive. During the 1992 riots in Los Angeles, where massive looting and destruction of property were prevalent, it was difficult to watch people destroy the communities in which they lived. From an outsider’s perspective, it

¹¹¹ As an example of this perception United States Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) said in a speech on the Senate floor “It causes a lot of people, including me, great distress to see judges use the authority that they have been given to make raw political or ideological decisions”...“the Supreme Court has taken on this role as a policymaker rather than an enforcer of political decisions made by elected representatives of the people”... I don't know if there is a cause-and-effect connection, but we have seen some recent episodes of courthouse violence in this country. . . . And I wonder whether there may be some connection between the perception in some quarters, on some occasions, where judges are making political decisions yet are unaccountable to the public, that it builds up and builds up and builds up to the point where some people engage in, engage in violence.” For more detail about Cornyn’s speech see Charles Babington, “Senator Links Violence To “Political” Decisions,” The Washington Post April 5 2005.

seemed not to be in the best interest of those engaged in the acts of violence.

However, when one considers it from the perspective of alienation the acts of violence become understandable. Examining the feelings of dispossession and of being left behind by the larger, capitalist structure of society helps to illuminate the reason why businesses were targeted for looting and destruction; many looters had a desire to lash out at the values symbolically represented by the businesses and their owners.¹¹² While outsiders may have viewed the riots as an act of self-destruction, many of the participants viewed it as an act of reclaiming the neighborhood for their own community values. The rioters expressed a lack of control over their existence. As Burke argues, a sense of connection to the social order is unlikely to exist when individuals feel as if they lack control over the circumstances of their lives (ROM 33), which can lead to a violent backlash against the insignia of the order's values.

Furthermore, alienation can also be precipitated by what Burke refers to as the neo-Malthusian principle—the taking of ideas and actions to their entelechial end. Values are ideas, and as such, are at risk of being pushed too far and becoming unhealthy for the individual and/or the social order. As values are instantiated, they become bureaucratized (Burke ATH 225) and can lead to unintended consequences (314). One of the perils of the entelechial push of bureaucratization is a disconnect between the rights of the individual and his subsequent obligation to the social order (298). This move is descendent in nature as the moral view moves from the

¹¹² For more detail of how this attitude was taken by looters see Daniel B. Wood, "L.A.'S Darkest Days," The Christian Science Monitor April 29 2002. Interviews with participants illuminate the anger about the economic devastation of the neighborhood and how conflicts between ethnic groups charged the violence that occurred.

universal—the social—back to the individual. The “thou shall not do X” becomes “though shall not do X to me” without a sense of reciprocity to treat others as a person demands others treat him. The individual becomes the central arbiter of values at the expense of the social order, and a sense of obligation to others is diminished. Consider the example of a college education and plagiarism. The purpose of attending college is to provide students with the knowledge that they need to function in certain segments of the social order, and the degree the student receives is the symbol that lets others know that the knowledge was attained. However, a study by the Center for Academic Integrity indicates that 80% of all college students have cheated at least once (Moser-Katz n.p.), which undermines the purpose of the educational process and gives students benefits that they did not earn. The student who cheats has determined that he deserves a certain grade and believes that he should not have to do the work to attain it. All obligation of fairness to other students who do their own work is lost in this moral calculation, and the cheater is removing himself from the constraints of the value system of the social order while maintaining his right to the benefits found within it. This is an act of alienation because it disconnects the individual from the broader value system and any sense of obligation to others, which is necessary for a society of shared values to exist. While it could be argued that this is not an example of alienation because the cheating student is over-identifying with certain values of the social order—the desire to have a college degree and the ability to get the type of job this status confers—and as a result, is still showing an investment in the symbols of authority of the order; this conception is

problematic because the student fundamentally does not recognize the competing rights of others in the social order. The value system in which he is operating is inherently antisocial and represents a form of “bad identification” (Burke ATH 267) and is indicative of alienation.

When discussing alienation, Burke largely focuses on the ways in which the individual becomes separated from others and the social order; however, I also believe that individuals can become alienated from themselves, not just spiritually, but also bodily. The rapidity with which symbols of authority both emerge and dissipate in contemporary American society increases the likelihood of alienation occurring. Burke argues that one of the ways people combat alienation is through the immediacy of the senses and a return to the primal (ATH 218), and I argue that this attempt to return to the primal can cause one to turn against their own physicality—becoming alienated from their physical self in an effort to connect with others in society. Current technology makes it possible to abandon the sanctity of one’s own physicality, and the cult of commodities makes it easy to see one’s physical being as yet one more resource to be manipulated in an attempt meet a cultural ideal.

Contemporary society has done much to alienate people from their biological sources of being by selling products that claim to “fix” the “problem” that is one’s body. Hair can be re-grown; bodily odors can be masked; teeth can be straightened and whitened; bodies can be plumped or shrunk by plastic surgery. Plastic surgeon, Dr. Lisa Jenks, is quoted as saying “I think—for better or worse—our culture has made looking our best, looking young so important” (Guillentine n.p.). A “cure” to every

conceivable flaw that one has can be purchased even if it trades-off with maintaining one's physical health. The preceding article notes that in 2004, approximately one-third of those having cosmetic surgery had a household income below \$30,000, and in some instances the sacrifices needed to pay for the surgery included health insurance. The body is turned into a resource to be exploited for the purposes of connecting with an ephemeral social value of what an "acceptable" body looks like.

This phenomenon is further illuminated by the pro-ana movement, wherein bad identifications lead to self-destructive behaviors that directly and immediately cause harm to one's physical being. Anorexia Nervosa is a psychological disorder that causes individuals to starve themselves to reach a physically unhealthy weight. While most people consider the act of starving oneself to the point of illness or death as being a problem, a growing movement of anorexics is defending the act as a lifestyle choice.¹¹³ Pro-anorexic websites offer advice and encouragement to those who wish to starve themselves to meet an unhealthy physical aesthetic. The desire to harm the body to gain "control" over one's life illustrates a level of self-hatred that is best understood as alienation from oneself. The body is devalued in an effort to gain a sense place in the world. A disjuncture is created in which the only way the individual can find a place in the social world is to separate oneself from the biological basis of survival. It could be argued that the creation of community in the pro-anorexic movement is a process of repossession. While it is true that the

¹¹³ For example see the following web sites: <http://www.ringsworld.com/pro-anorexia.html>, <http://community.livejournal.com/proanorexia> 7-23-2008. As of 2001, over 400 similar sites existed. For more detail about this phenomenon see Jessica Reaves, "Anorexia Goes High Tech," *Time* July 31 2001.

individuals are identifying with others, the valuation present in the community furthers a valuation of the self that is pathological and in some instances deadly.

While alienation does often have pernicious effects on the individual and the social order, alienation can at times be viewed as a positive act. When the values of the social order itself are harmful to people, alienation can be viewed as an act of rebellion or resistance. By rejecting and separating oneself from the dominant value structure, the alienated individual can make an affirmative revaluation of values that has the potential to better the self and society. In one sense, all revolutions began as alienation as the individuals involved reject the values of the social order and work to alter them into a preferable form. In the next section, I will examine the process of repossession, wherein individuals who are alienated attempt to regain a sense of control over the symbols of authority and underlying values of the social order.

Chapter 11: Repossession

Alienation is usually viewed negatively because of the dispossession that some feel in relation to the larger social orders in which they reside. While alienation can have horrific effects on the individual psyche and the society in which he lives, from a perspective of valuation it does not necessarily have to be seen as bad thing. While it does lead individuals to feel as if they no longer have a stake in the current value system, this sense of dispossession can also have positive effects if it leads to the emergence of a value system that better meets the needs of people. During periods of alienation, individuals try to regain control over their circumstances by attempting to repossess the symbols of authority of the social order (Burke ATH 315). As such, repossession is always a moral act because it is an effort to alter the value system in some way. In this section, I will examine the symbolic means of repossession, the ways this can alter value systems, and finally the perils and possibilities that these alterations can accrue.

Individuals attempting to repossess the world in which they live can utilize a number of rhetorical strategies. While these begin as symbolic maneuvers, actions frequently follow as people take the steps necessary to actualize the value changes they want to see occur. The first of these is what Burke labels as secular prayer, which refers to any mimetic action that encourages a particular attitude or behavior (ATH 321) and is always value laden (322). For example, the recitation of the pledge of allegiance or standing and placing one's hand over her heart during the playing of the national anthem are efforts to enact patriotism. Many times secular prayer is an

entirely symbolic act because it is coaching a particular value assessment that relies upon people's voluntary acceptance of it. However, when these valuations become bureaucratized, they move beyond the purely symbolic and involve other factors. Laws are the codification of particular value assessments that take on the force of the state to ensure people's compliance with them (141 note).

In the process of repossession, secular prayer can play a significant role in changing the underlying value judgments made by the social order, and this can be affected either from the top down or from the bottom up. America's history of race relations illustrates this point. The abolitionist movement attempted to persuade the populace and governmental actors that slavery was morally unjustifiable. While many heeded their call, it was not until the nation resorted to the bloodshed of the Civil War that the practice was ultimately ended. However, the abolition of slavery was insufficient to alter the underlying perceptions of Black inferiority that undergirded the slave trade, and the post-reconstruction South maintained a virtual slave trade by systematically disenfranchising the Black population and denying them access to the levers of political and economic power (Marable 41). When Blacks succeeded in spite of the efforts of the white majority, they were frequently beaten, jailed, and/or lynched to enforce a particular view of race relations.¹¹⁴ This was an effort to coach an attitude of white supremacy, Black subservience, and enforcement of an economic caste system that reserved access to the insignia of symbols of authority for the white population.

¹¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of this issue see White Rope and Faggot.

This struggle over race relations in the United States illustrates the process of both alienation and repossession. Under slavery Blacks were alienated from the rights and privileges guaranteed by the Constitution; however, when the Constitution was altered to allow Blacks access to it, many Southern whites were alienated from the broader American culture.¹¹⁵ They rejected the alterations of the new American value system, and some to this day perceive the South as an aggrieved population whose rights were unjustly trampled upon by the aggressors from the North.¹¹⁶ Conversely, the Black communities that were formed in the post-war era illustrate the effort to possess the symbols of authority to which Blacks had long been denied access. The struggle for racial equality illustrates the how dynamic the process of alienation and repossession, which is sometimes largely symbolic, but that is at other times corporal in the basest meaning of the word.

A second means by which people attempt to repossess the symbols of authority of the social order is through historical interpretation. According to Burke, “a rationale of history is the first step whereby the dispossessed repossess the world” (ATH 315). Every effort to place a value judgment on historical events is an effort to define the acts and actors in relation to the value system of the present or of a preferred value system. One reading of American history could establish the

¹¹⁵ Obviously, in the instance of slavery this was more than a symbolic act, but Burke’s theory encourages one to look at both the symbolic aspects of an issue and the ways in which the symbolic is materially instantiated.

¹¹⁶ As an illustration of this, RedState.com, a conservative blog, in an effort to support the continued occupation of Iraq used the following analogy in an email sent to its members: “Of course, it could just be that the Democrats are clueless about the military. Someone should ask the Democrats if they think we’re still at war with the confederacy, the Germans, and the Japanese given all the standing American armies in the South, Germany, and Japan.” As posted on Liberal Values, April 9, 2008, accessed April 25, 2008 <<http://liberalvaluesblog.com/?p=3120>>

founders of our nation as heroes who were able to throw off the shackles of monarchical oppression. A second reading could say that the American founders were subversive terrorists who overthrew a legitimate government. Each potential reading of history has a basis in historical fact, but in each, the value assessment differs. Depending upon one's current values and desires, one of the readings will be more appealing than the other. When rhetors evaluate history, they are always making a value judgment, and the value judgment is a means by which humans establish themselves as for or against a particular order, which frequently has implications for how we value the present system.

The use of historical valuation can be seen in most efforts to alter the value system of a social order. Social movements frequently rely on rhetorical strategies that change who has access to or what constitutes the symbols of authority of the order. Consider the women's suffrage movement. The goal of the movement was to establish the full rights of citizenship to women by providing access to one of the greatest symbols of authority of a democratic regime—the franchise. In this instance, the goal was not to alter the symbol or its underlying value judgment; instead the goal was to expand who could have access to it. Historically, women were believed to be too reliant on emotions and unable to act rationally; one element of the rhetoric of the movement attempted to reconstitute the perception of women's abilities to function in a "mans" world. Through the use of logical argument, many of the rhetors enacted the ability to be rational and argued that the reason that women *appeared* to be incapable of rational thought was because they had been denied access to the formal

schooling that taught people how to be rational.¹¹⁷ Hence, the valuation of history was altered in order to change the values of the current order.

Rhetorical repossession can also occur via the process of mythmaking, wherein people “own a myth to take up the slack between what is desired and what is got” (Burke ATH 315). Burke notes that mythos originally meant “word” and hence has come to mean a narrative form (LAS 380) that tells the origin of the order (383), and “its moral authority is a direct or indirect means of influencing the dispositions and habits” (395) of its members. In other words, the order is a system of governance, and the myth is “designed not merely to account for ‘origins’ but also to account for them in ways that provide sanctions for the given order” (395). Hence, all cultures have mythical figures that exemplify the values of the order, and when individuals feel alienated from the dominant myth and values, they will frequently seek a counter mythology as a means to feel in possession of their lives and as a propagandistic tool by which to entice others to identify with the counter myth. An example of this process can be seen in the adaptation of Viking mythology by white supremacist groups for the purposes of countering the value of multiculturalism found in contemporary American society.¹¹⁸ In an effort to explain the origins of white supremacy and to justify the desire to enforce white dominance by force, the hate groups bypass the dominant mythologies of America and co-opt an ancient, warrior religion that is seen out of place by the culture at large. The danger of this adaptation

¹¹⁷ See for example Clarina Howard Nichols, “The Responsibilities of Woman,” Man Cannot Speak for Her, ed. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989).

¹¹⁸ For a discussion of the use of Nordic mythology to advance the cause of white supremacy see Neo-Nazis: Two Hate Groups Are on the Move, Spring 2008, Southern Poverty Law Center, Available: <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=892>, April 26 2008.

is in the power of the myth to compel actions by its followers. As Burke notes, myths operate rhetorically by a reductive simplification (137) that “brings up resources of its own” (151) because of the entelechial properties of the symbol system itself. Once one accepts the notion that he has not only the right to conquer others but will also be rewarded in the afterlife, attempts to violently vanquish the “enemy” are not far behind.

The above analysis is not to suggest that all myth making is dangerous, but it does illustrate the power of mythology to alter the values of a given social order. In some instances, the myth is expansive and attempts to create a means of peaceful coexistence among differing peoples; however, in other situations, it can function to clearly delineate friend from foe in a way that marks the line of battle and justifies whatever means necessary to vanquish the enemy. Burke, in his essay “The Rhetoric of Hitler’s Battle” illustrates the pernicious and destructive outcomes that the latter can have for a social order (PLF 164-189) when the mythologized enemy exists in the extant world. Hitler resolved his personal alienation by exterminating those whom he saw as the source of his dispossession.

Closely related to the process of myth making, another symbolic process of repossession can be found in what Burke referred to as rituals of purification and rebirth. Many religions provide a means by which individuals and/or social orders can be purified and their “sins” can be cast out. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the Christian faith and the subsequent ritual of communion that celebrates the sacrifice of Jesus is an exemplar of this process. Christ was sacrificed so that humans could be

“forgiven” of their sins, and the act of communion is a ritual enactment that allows people access to his sacrifice. While the notion of ritual purification is well understood in religious terms, it also plays a significant role in secular social orders as people engage in symbolic behaviors to purify the order. Through the use of word magic, people are able to redefine and reweigh words in an effort to alter one’s understanding and valuation of a situation and to symbolically “purge” that which had been the source of the “problem.” Thus, a new order is allowed to emerge from the ashes of the old. Burke argues that symbolic purification is “ingrained in the nature of symbolic action” (SOM 270), and even slight alterations in the symbols that we use can have a purgatory effect (ROM 310). Consequently, even subtle alterations in our language can have a profound effect on how we understand the value system in which we operate.

As individuals attempt to regain possession of the world in which they live, their choices will necessarily implicate others in the social order, and this means that the values of the broader social order will be affected in some way. As a general rule, value changes can either occur slowly and gradually, wherein many of elements of the previous value system are still present in whole or in part, or they can occur rapidly, wherein large segments of the previous value system are rejected out-of-hand. In the former, individuals are able to eliminate elements of the value system that are no longer functional for the social unit while retaining those parts that help maintain and nourish it. Amending the United States’ Constitution to expand its rights to women and African Americans illustrates this point. The ideals of liberal

democracy were maintained while at the same time expanding who was considered eligible for those rights; this act of transcendence broadly expanded the notion of whom “We the People” are.

In some instances, the value structure becomes self-perpetuating and is able to largely maintain itself because of the beliefs of those who are alienated from it. Burke refers to this notion as an “authoritative structure,” which “encourages the dispossessed to feel that his only hope of repossession lies in his allegiance to the structure that has dispossessed him” (ATH 329-30). When this occurs, individuals who are alienated turn the blame for their dispossession upon themselves or on others who symbolically represent themselves. Consider the instance of some African American leaders in the post-reconstruction South who accepted the dominant narrative that only the criminal elements within their community suffered at the hands of the lynch mob;¹¹⁹ another example would be that of anti-suffrage women who actively worked to keep women from getting the franchise. In both instances, the valuation of the dominant belief structure had been so internalized that their own identity was threatened when the value system was criticized. The problem was symbolically constructed such that the value system was not the problem, but instead, the people who pointed out the flaws of that system were the threat. In both of these examples, only a minority of the aggrieved population accepted this interpretation, and change was eventually enacted. However, these examples illustrate the

¹¹⁹ Anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells discusses the prevalence of this attitude in the latter part of the 19th century in her autobiography as she relates her own acceptance of this notion and how the lynching of a close friend of hers caused her to come to the realization that this belief was false. See Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Crusade for Justice, ed. Alfreda M. Duster (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

connection between one's personal identity and the symbols of authority of the social order, and the power this has to convince people that the current order needs to be maintained in spite of the harms that it may be causing to the self and to others. In an authoritative structure, value change is more likely to occur slowly, and vestiges of the old belief structure will likely remain intact because they have never been fully discredited.

Conversely, value change is sometimes revolutionary, wherein the current structure is repudiated and rejected outright. Symbolically, one of the reasons this occurs is by the process that Burke refers to as "being driven into the corner" (Burke ATH 220-224), which is an amplifying device "requiring the man who would reject a little to reject a great deal" (222). This occurs when a value system has been created that "bears upon every important aspect of a man's social relations," which makes it "hard for him to question the structure at any one point" (222-3). Each aspect of one's values implicate others in such a way that "before he is through he is forced to reject all sorts of ingredients that he might, originally, have left unquestioned" (223). Consequently, even the aspects of the value system that are positive for the individual are rejected because of the belief that the system cannot be rid of the negative aspects of it. In these circumstances, people feel as if the only alternative available to them is to reject the system outright. When a large enough number of members of the order have these feelings, a revolutionary change is possible, wherein the old system is completely repudiated by the newly emergent order.

Any time value frames are in flux, the social order will necessarily be unstable. The interregnum is a period in which a new set of perils and/or possibilities can emerge (Burke ATH 216). Old symbols of authority begin to lose favor and new ones begin to emerge, but because the new ones have not yet had time to be established, values can change rapidly as people attempt to adapt to the new situation. When dealing with society as a whole, the interregnum is the time in which the society can reemerge as a stronger and more cohesive order, or it has the possibility to break apart and become increasingly fragmented. When repossession occurs on a symbolic level, the individual is experiencing a perspective by incongruity as she reevaluates her present situation and alters her understanding of it. It is this change in perspective that allows one to see the ways in which language is weighted and how it can be converted to adapt to the new situation, which opens one to the possibility of transcendence and a new beginning (309-314).

However, while repossession may intuitively seem to be a positive act, it can occur in such a way that it is problematic for the social order as a whole. The means of repossession can become pathological if the act serves to further fragment the social order. In the ideal, transcendence will occur, which allows all members of society to feel invested in its symbols of authority and have the outcome of this investment have a positive effect on their lives. However, the symbolic strategies involved in repossession can occur in a way that precludes transcendence from occurring. While “the weightings of rhetoric can be transcended” (Burke ROM 97), it can just as easily be descendant, causing increased fragmentation in the social

order; this can subsequently lead to acts of identification that preclude transcendence among the competing factions. While identification is always transcendent, (326), certain types of it can prevent identification beyond a certain point, and in some instances, the conflict that cannot be resolved verbally is instead dealt with violently. Consider the case of white supremacist groups. While the members of the hate-group have strong identifications with others in the group, the values present in their ideals preclude identification with others from outside of the group. Humans who do not meet the strict requirements of ethnic background and attitudinal support for white supremacy can *never* become part of the system, and since ethnic minorities and the white people who associate with them are seen as being destructive to the value system, transcendence among the groups is unlikely to occur. The framing of the global war on terror as viewed by George W. Bush's administration is also an example of this type of understanding of identification. Bush's framing of the issue of "either you're with us or you're against us," makes it less likely that other nations and individuals will accept the invitation to be on "our side," and it offers a possible explanation of why global views of the United States are on the decline.¹²⁰ This is not to say that transcendence can never occur, it just indicates that it is highly unlikely within the present order.

In other instances, repossession can occur in a way that is ultimately vacuous and fails to provide the connection that the alienated individual so desires. As Burke notes, a difference exists between "true transcendence and the empty acquisition of

¹²⁰ To see how much global approval of the United States has fallen see "America's Image Slips, But Allies Share U.S. Concerns Over Iran, Hamas," Pew Global Attitudes Project June 13, 2006 8-27-08 <<http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=252>>

the verbal paraphernalia” (ATH 337). When identification occurs with symbols of authority that lack substance and the ability to provide meaning to the individual’s life, the transcendent act of repossession may leave the individual feeling even more empty and lonely. I believe this to be one of the potential problems with a large number of symbols of authority emanating from popular culture because the individual is left with an ephemeral sense of connection that can evaporate at a moments notice, which leaves behind nothing except a sense of greater alienation.

A sociological study published in 2006, indicates that individuals in America have fewer voluntary associations and have fewer confidants than previous generations of people have had (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Brashears 358). While this is a sign of increased alienation, I believe that alternative means of establishing social engagements are emerging that Burke’s theories suggest may help to counter the type of loneliness outlined by the study. A number of factors indicate that efforts at repossession are occurring. As argued previously, one way in which symbols of authority have changed in the contemporary era is through the use of virtual symbols, and the use of virtual settings has the potential to help individuals reestablish a sense of community with others—even if the others are anonymous. I point to three examples to illustrate this point: on-line gaming, virtual worlds such as Second Life, and social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. The following arguments are based on what Burke’s theory of valuation suggests is possible; they are not definitive answers, and are perhaps influenced by my general optimism in

people's ability to refashion their social environment in a way that ultimately meets their needs.

To discuss the first example of on-line gaming, I will use World of Warcraft to clarify my point.¹²¹ In this game, individuals develop a character through which they engage in virtual adventures with others also playing the game. While this game can be played by oneself offline, it is increasingly common for individuals to play on-line with others because it is easier to traverse the virtual world as a group of travelers than by oneself. When people enter the game, they can create alliances with others in order to navigate the virtual world, wherein they are undergoing a quest of some sort. In some instances, they may align with others where their only interaction is within the virtual realm itself, but in other situations, they may have actual contact with the other players. Many gamers have phone headsets that allow them to speak with players in other locations in order to better plan their actions within the game. This may seem as an odd sort of voluntary association, wherein individuals may not even know the others' real names or anything about them as real people. However, the efforts at cooperation that are needed to be successful in the game are voluntary associations that require the individuals to engage in community formation. Even though the community is in part or in totality virtual and the main connection between people is largely anonymous, it is possible that the game provides individuals a means by which to express themselves and be involved in all aspects of life that exist in an extant social order. Symbols of authority exist within the game, and individuals are

¹²¹ *World of Warcraft* has an estimated 8 million users worldwide who play the game, and is seen as the most popular on-line game. See for more information about the game see Alan Sipress, "Does Virtual Reality Need a Sheriff," The Washington Post June 2 2007.

required to make valuations as they make choices as to how to proceed. In a way, the gamers are engaging in a process of symbolic purification as they act out needs and desires in the virtual realm that has the possibility to alleviate the sense of isolation that they may be feeling in the extant world. Burke argues that ritual purging can be small and simple (ROM 310), and gamers are provided the means to express aspects of themselves that may not be conducive to living in the extant social order, while at the same time creating connections with others that may help to alleviate feelings of alienation from that order.

The on-line virtual world of Second Life gives an even better example of this phenomenon.¹²² It is an on-line world in which individuals take on an avatar and live in the virtual world as the character they create. Characters can do anything that humans can do in the actual world. They form communities; they buy property (with real money); they establish households; some get married; others fight, and some commit crimes. The creator of Second Life established the game with a Libertarian philosophy, where the only constraint upon individual behavior is the reaction of others. The entire game is a simulation of a social order wherein players can play-out fantasies and live a life that they are unable to live in the extant world. Burke argues in his essay “Literature as Equipment for Living” that one of the benefits of literature is that it provides a means to understand ideas and events prior to or without having actually experienced them (PLF 253-170). The game Second Life is a technological advancement of this potentiality because not only do players get to encounter events

¹²² For an in-depth description of the game see “My Virtual Life,” Business Week May 1 2006.

and ideas that they may not have dealt with in the extant world, they also have a chance to experiment with making choices and seeing how others respond to them. In the game, players do everything that can be done in a real world, including creating societies and the corresponding values by which the order should operate.

While some might argue that Second Life provides a means of escaping the world and hence, it is potentially alienating, Burke's theory suggests that it has the potential to provide a means for people to develop bonds with others in a world in which they feel as if they have some control over their destiny, and as such, it is a means by which individuals can repossess the world that they live in. However, this is not to say that problems do not exist within Second Life that can be transferred to the extant world. The game has been criticized for the "moral" lapses that frequently exist within its borders.¹²³ Players commit virtual crimes, and the community is highly sexualized. In some instances, players role-play sex acts, such as pedophilia, that if were done in the extant world would end in jail time. The real possibility exists that individuals playing the game could come to view the values of the virtual order as acceptable in the extant order, which could lead to anti-social behaviors. However, it is important to keep in mind the purgatory effect that role-playing can have for individuals. Burke argues that symbolic purification can be experienced in simple ways. One of which is the mere act of saying something, which he believes can have a cleansing effect (SOM 307). A second is the act of leaving things behind (132). Games such as Second Life permit players to enact desires that they could not

¹²³ As an example of this see Michael Gerson, "Where the Avatars Roam," The Washington Post July 6 2007.

engage in the extant world, and the game allows them to leave the desires behind in the virtual realm. Humans have many desires that are anti-social, and the virtual realm give people the opportunity to experience these desires in a safe environment in which real people are not hurt. While it is certainly possible that some players will develop a “taste” for the anti-social behaviors that they develop in the virtual world, many others may experience the symbolic cleansing that Burke suggests is possible, and the game provides a means for individuals to develop connections with others outside of the game itself. One example of this is that of a couple whose avatars first met and married in the Second Life and who then ultimately met and married in the real world.¹²⁴ The game for them ultimately provided a means to create a connection in the extant that would not have otherwise occurred, and a new social unit was created.

Social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace offer a similar means of creating communities that otherwise would not have existed. Communities are formed based upon a number of factors, which include common interests. The sites provide an easy means for people to find others who have similar hobbies, enjoy the same music, movies, television shows, etc., and share similar values. The ability of people to interact with others who have commonalities with them has the potential to allow individuals to feel a sense of community that they might not have otherwise felt. Unlike on-line gaming, social networking sites assume that individuals are who

¹²⁴ For the details of this story see Catherine Evans Wales, "Vow Its for Real," Wales on Sunday July 29 2007.

they represent themselves to be,¹²⁵ and the purpose is to allow individuals to establish communities in which they can commune with others via the internet in a personal and virtually face-to-face manner, which creates opportunities for individuals to feel reconnected to a broader social order. What it means to be a part of a community is dramatically changing, and young adults who have only existed in the internet age will likely have very different understanding of what it means to be part of a social order than those of us who came of age before its development.

The above examples illustrate ways in which people attempt to create a sense of connection in an era of mass communication technologies and suggest that people have a greater number of options available to them to develop social units and the values that coincide with them. Burke's theories illustrate the potential that these new social locations have for people to form communities and develop bonds with others. Technology has forever altered the world in which we live, and an application of Burkean theories provides a means to interrogate the ways in which its products have altered the nature of the social order in which we live. It is possible that these new venues will allow for a level of repossession that people cannot find in their extant existence.

The complexity of (re)valuation cannot be overstated. While many humans have a desire to believe that an ultimate value system exists, the historical reality is

¹²⁵ While it is true that some people create false identities on these sites in order to engage in unethical and sometimes illegal behaviors, the purpose of the site and the way it is deployed by most participants is as a means to maintain connections with current friends and to find other people that they would like to befriend. I do not deny that potential problems such as pedophilia do exist on these sites; however, I am examining them on the basis of how they are intended to be utilized and how most users seem to actually use them.

that values emerge from the exigencies which societies face and the ways in which humans respond to them. As such, it is important to understand that the process of alienation and repossession is virtually constant and occurs at all strata of society, and individuals can simultaneously feel alienated and in possession at the same time. As social orders change, value systems can both provide people with the means to positively function in society as well as be the source of dispossession. Consequently, it is important to understand the symbolic means by which people can most efficaciously deal with these circumstances.

Chapter 12: Conclusion

Throughout this work, I have endeavored two things. First, I wanted to explicate what Kenneth Burke's understanding of valuation is, and second, I attempted to illustrate in a limited way how his theory can illuminate social phenomena and value discourse as practiced. In this final chapter, I will do three things. First, I will outline some broad themes that have emerged from the preceding analysis; second, I will highlight weaknesses of the project, and finally I offer suggestions for future research that emerge from this work.

To begin, one key theme that emerges from the analysis of the ten key terms is the role emotions play in value discourse. Burke suggests that humans have a “profoundly emotional...response to meanings” (P&C 167). As such, one cannot discount the role that emotions play in (re)valuation. While the use of weighted words is profoundly ethical, the weighting also provides the emotional force behind words that make them aesthetically and rhetorically powerful (167). Burke discusses the “personality of symbols” to illustrate the way in which the weighting of words evokes emotions from auditors, which permeates every symbolic act—even scientific discourse (SOM 48). For Burke, there is no such thing as a neutral vocabulary (ROM 92-3), and emotions inhere to the eulogistic and dyslogistic elements of words. That which is praiseworthy evokes positive emotions while that which is blameworthy brings forth negative emotions. Rhetoric appeals to emotions “by its nature as an attitude summed up, or completed, *now*” (SOM 43 note), and when the emotion is “channelized into a symbol,” it “becomes a generative force” (CS 61), which is the

power of word magic. An emotion can be evoked simply through the power of symbols to call forth a value judgment.

Pieties represent our value system and shape what we see as right and wrong, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, etc. Because they are system builders—they represent the core of our identity—pieties will always be intertwined with our emotions. When our pieties are challenged, we have an emotional reaction; when our pieties are reinforced we have an emotional reaction, and these emotional reactions can ultimately lead to a change in the system itself. Emotional responses can lead to actions that fundamentally alter one's identity, which necessitates a change in valuation. Consider the way in which fear appeals were utilized after the terrorist attack of 9/11 and the subsequent policies that ensued. Actions such as torture and rendition for the purpose of torture occurred with little opposition. The view of America as a bastion of freedom and human rights was washed aside on an enormous wave of fear, which fundamentally altered the pieties of the American culture, and the previous discussion of Rush Limbaugh and Rep. Dana Rohrabacher equating torture with fraternity pranks illustrates this. The emotional reactions people have can be manipulated and/or channeled in order to alter the underlying system of values under certain circumstances. This is not to say that emotional reactions always lead to alterations in our values. Many values people hold are rationally calculated and can be justified with reason, and as such, can partially withstand the pressure of emotional reactions and manipulations. However, emotions will always play a role in the process; it cannot be helped. Our first reaction to situations requiring valuation will

almost certainly be emotional, and the emotions will remain present even when playing a subservient role to the rational.

Another way in which emotions interact with valuation is through the process of identification, which is a highly emotional maneuver wherein we allow ourselves to *feel* a connection with another person—at a minimum with the symbolic representation of the person. When identification occurs we overlay a sense of self with that of another person, and an action toward the other can be *felt* as an action toward the self (ROM 21), which can bring forth the same range of emotions as if the action were directed toward the self. This key process of social value formation is virtually impossible without the ability to emotionally relate with others. We can also identify with ideals and the symbols of authority associated with them. Consider the highly emotional reaction some have to the act of burning the American flag in protest. While the flag proper is just a piece of cloth, what it represents for some is a nexus of values that is being symbolically destroyed by the protester, which can lead to a highly emotional reaction. Efforts to elide the emotional element of value systems are doomed to fail because emotions are one of the driving forces behind the instantiation of values within a social order. Burke's theory suggests that without emotions, we could not have values as we currently understand them because emotions provide the ability to connect with others in a way that moves beyond the strictly utilitarian. They provide the connections that allow people to put others above the self and as such, are a critical component of sociality.

However, this emotional aspect of human interaction does not always provide sociality; it can also lead to dissociation. When one is unable to identify with others in the order and/or the order itself alienation occurs, which is a deeply emotional response to feelings of rejection. Identification functions through the arousal of emotions that provide a feeling of commonality and connection; alienation functions in the opposite direction—by arousing emotions such as anger and vengeance. Associations and dissociations are deeply emotional states that can overwhelm the rational aspects of humanity under certain circumstances and have the power to alter valuations. For example, consider the number of divorces in America that end with two people who formerly had positive attitudes for the other hating each other, and it is not uncommon for people in these situations to engage in actions that are contrary to their previous value systems because the emotional force of the situation is so compelling. Or consider the notion of a hate crime, which is a crime that is based in an irrational hatred of a person in a protected category, such as homosexuals. The emotionally driven valuation of a person pushes the perpetrator to view the other as less than human and a threat to his value system.

Emotions are inextricably intertwined with many aspects of the ten terms Burke argued are key to moral and aesthetic valuation. These terms represent humans qua humans as morals necessarily deal with human interaction within a social order. Burke's theory suggests that emotions are a significant driving force in all value assessments and that challenges to one's values are likely to result in an emotional response. This emotional response is positive when it allows people to connect with

others empathetically, but it also has the capacity to lead to dissociations and thoughtless responses that have the ability to alter the entire *system of values* at the expense of pursuing *the purity of one value*. From a rhetorical perspective, this suggests that one way in which rhetors are able to evoke value change within a society is to create an emotionally charged environment that short circuits thoughtful response, and the pursuit of one value that has preeminence provides the means to alter and perhaps undermine other values.

Second, Burke's theory of valuation suggests that value systems are not and cannot be static. They will always be in flux—even though people may desire a stable set of values and will use a variety of symbolic maneuvers to retain the perception of continuity within the system. As such, any attempt to alter or maintain a certain set of values will always be fraught with difficulty because of recalcitrance within the system and of individuals. Overt efforts to alter values will frequently be met with resistance by at least some members of the social order. As such, any alteration of the value system will be negotiated—literally as it is discussed among people and within institutions, but also figuratively based upon the choices people make and the actions that they take. Nonetheless, even when a new value assessment is resisted, the system will inevitably be altered in some way as a new variable is added to the mix. It will never return to the status quo ante.

It is also impossible for the value system to emerge exactly as the proponent of the new value envisions. The outcome will never be exactly as intended. Consider the case of *Roe v. Wade*. While the decision purported to guarantee a woman's right

to have an abortion, the subsequent actions of the pro-life movement fundamentally altered what the meaning of that right was. Abortions have been limited based upon type of procedure, locations, parental notification, etc. through legislation, which has been affirmed by court rulings, and by the choices of individual doctors and hospitals not to practice abortion. What this also suggests is that if one wants a particular value to be maintained—recognizing that it will never be maintained in exactly the same manner—it must be continually coached via secular prayer to maintain its importance. If it is not, it becomes increasingly susceptible to alteration or removal as other values are pushed within the system by other members of the social order.

A constant interaction between the individual and the social order alters the value systems of both. Burke's theory suggests that in an increasingly flattened globe, these interactions occur at greater levels than they have in the past as the number of social orders people belong to increases. This is likely to make it more difficult to maintain the perception of a stable value system, which has the potential to alter the ability of societies to remain cohesive. While some people deal well with uncertainty and difference, others do not. Those who have difficulty with uncertainty may respond by attempting to make the order fit their perceived notions of what the order ought to be; however, this maneuver will likely be met with resistance, which makes it possible that increased social conflicts will emerge that end in repression or violence as people work to "purify" the value system to which they pledge allegiance.

Third, those who control access to a society's symbols of authority and their insignia have significant ability to shape the values of a social order. This, however,

is not an uncontested power. Minorities can and do play a role in shaping the order through their own actions and via the actions the majority takes toward them (Burke CS 71). While those with power have an advantage in shaping the social order, they cannot control it absolutely. The nature of symbol systems suggests that values will always be adapted to particular circumstances, and the entelechial push of the symbolically expressed values can move the order in unpredictable directions that do not always correspond with the interests of the powerful. The unintended consequences that arise when values are expressed or new values are suggested move beyond the control of those who originally suggested them. For example, one could argue that Saddam Hussein's evaluation that he needed to maintain the fiction that he retained Weapons of Mass Destruction to deter Iran was ultimately what led to his demise as the United States used those weapons as a pretext to invade Iraq and remove him from power. All value choices we make have consequences and those consequences are frequently outside of our control. This is not to suggest that all valuations will lead ultimately to our demise, but it does suggest that values cannot be determined in a vacuum. Without considering the cultural, and increasingly the global, context in which those values are expressed, one cannot truly understand the universe of potential consequences, and even when one considers all of the potentialities that one can fathom, others are still likely to emerge. While one can minimize the unintended consequences of any choice, they cannot be completely removed.

Finally, the particular ways in which orders attempt to maintain values will always be localized, but at the same time, the strategies will rely upon human universals—those things, such as emotions, of which all humans are capable. The strategies will be based upon extant cultural beliefs and values as well as the forces that the organization of the society necessitates. For example, the strategy that would be used in an advanced capitalist economy is not the same as the strategy that would be used in a feudal state because the productive elements of society inherently shape what value judgments can be made at a particular time and location. However, this does not deny that humans have the capacity for symbol use, and this capacity is what allows us to have a “universal” experience. Hence, it is fruitful to study the ways in which social orders have formed and altered values throughout history. At first glance it may appear that we can learn little that is relevant to our experience from past cultures (or current cultures) that seem to have no resemblance to our own; however, understanding the way their symbol use shaped the valuations within another culture can help to shed light on similar processes in our own culture to which our terministic screens blind us. This thought leads to the next element I would like to discuss: the limitations of my current work as well as suggestions for future avenues of inquiry.

Limitations and Areas for Future Inquiry

As with any work, this one too has its limitations and from these weaknesses potential areas for future inquiry emanate. As noted previously, Burke has over 500 original pieces of writing, and I only evaluated ten of them. While I believe I chose

his most significant and representative works, examining other writings by Burke could potentially add a deeper level of understanding to how Burke saw (re)valuation occurring. The ten key terms of moral and aesthetic strategy listed by Burke could probably be fleshed out in greater detail if other of Burke's writings were examined.

A second weakness of this work is that I did little to incorporate secondary sources that offered criticisms and extensions of Burkean theory. This move was again purposeful; my goal was to explain what Burke's theory of (re)valuation is, which is a requisite step prior to being able to show weaknesses or add extensions of the theory. While I did attempt to offer some limited extensions of Burke's thoughts as they relate to the contemporary technological advances that have altered how human communication occurs, this was a small effort. As such, it would be fruitful for future research to engage in two efforts. The first would be to examine current criticisms and extensions of Burke's works as they relate to the ten key terms and the clusters that surround them. For example, much work has been done on the issue of form, which has the potential to further clarify, show weaknesses and perhaps extend Burke's theories in a productive fashion. Second, it would also be useful to examine Burke's theory critically in order to show what its inherent strengths and weaknesses are. One area that I believe needs to be examined in this way is the question of how applicable Burke's theory is to non-Western cultures. Burke's writings are a product of Western culture and draw almost exclusively from cultural artifacts of the West. It is important to understand the way in which the particulars of a symbol system can shape the overall process of valuation. Burke suggests that his theories are universal

in that humans use symbol systems and what he outlines are the result of symbol use; however, it would be useful to examine this claim in greater detail. While Burke does support the notion that all applications of symbol use will be particular to the situation in which they are used, he does less to prove the broader claim that all symbol systems operate using a similar process.

A third weakness of this project is that I did not place Burke's understanding of (re)valuation within the broader discussion surrounding values. Values have been an aspect of inquiry for millennia, and it would be fruitful to place Burke's theory within this broader discourse. Burke's focus on *how* people form values via symbolic action is a useful counterpoint for metaphysical theories of values that attempt to create a universal basis *for* values. Burke is not the only theorist to provide this balance, but his works are rich with detail and cover a broad span of topics, which makes his works particularly useful for this sort of comparison.

Other potential areas for inquiry would also be fertile. It would be interesting to "test" Burke's theory by analyzing it using the scientific studies regarding brain formation and how human cognition occurs biologically. Some of the claims that Burke makes about human understanding have the potential to be supported or weakened by these studies. Much of Burke's writings deals with issues of perception and providing meaning to stimuli; as such, it necessarily implicated by these scientific inquiries, and they may provide information that allows for a better refinement of his thought. Burke's theory also has the potential to explain how the universal biological principles are instantiated in differing ways based upon symbol use. In this way,

Burke's theory has the potential to offer a richer context to better explain the biological processes. As such, his theory has the possibility to yield hypotheses that can then be scientifically studied. In this way, Burke's theory provides a useful heuristic basis for studies in fields such as psychology.

Furthermore, while Burke lived through enormous technological changes in his life-time—of which he was highly skeptical—he passed away prior to the current explosion of information technology and its ramifications into social orders around the globe. Hence, his theory needs to be examined to determine how it is implicated by the expansion of communication technology. While I incorporated a limited examination of this in the chapter on repossession, it is insufficient to provide a complete answer to this question. It would be useful for future analyses to explore this area to determine what limitations new technology places upon Burke's theory as well as what Burke's theory can tell us about the effect of technology on (re)valuation.

Finally, Burke was always cognizant of the way societies ordered their productive enterprises and the effects this ordering has upon society, its citizens, and the values that emanate from both. As such, the effect that living in an advanced, globalized capitalist system has on (re)valuation cannot be ignored. I explored one aspect of this when discussing popular culture and its relationship to values; however, this is but one small aspect of the economic system in which we reside. As such, using Burke's theory to examine other aspects of the economic system would likely provide a better understanding of the full ramifications of the economic system upon

valuation. Given that the economic system is a significant—if not the most significant—driving force within the society we live, it would be fruitful to examine it using Burke’s theory as a heuristic device to gain a better understanding of how the economic organization of an advanced capitalist society implicates (re)valuation. This would be useful from the perspective of how it affects our own society as well as other societies where the tentacles of our economy have spread.

Overall, I hope this work has provided a better understanding of Kenneth Burke’s theory of (re)valuation as well as how his theory can be deployed in the future to add insight into both (re)valuation as a process as well as the effects that can emerge from it. Burke argued that “a project for ‘getting along with people’ necessarily subsumes the concept of ‘the good life’ (ATH 256), and our system of values—if functioning ideally—would do both. It should provide a means for adjudicating what is right from wrong in a manner that recognizes the differences in people’s lived reality in such a way that all members of a social order feel a sense of “ownership” of the order and for what it stands. While this is difficult to accomplish—especially if one considers the entirety of the human race a social order—Burke’s theory points to the means both by which it has the potential to occur as well as the likely exigencies that will have to be overcome. I hope that this work has provided some small insight into the process of (re)valuation that makes it easier to achieve this laudable goal.

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